

2013

## **Dispositions and practices that promote teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students**

Karyn Mitchell Yeldell  
*College of William & Mary - School of Education*

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**DISPOSITIONS AND PRACTICES  
THAT PROMOTE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS  
WITH AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE ELEMENTARY STUDENTS**

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A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

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In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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by  
Karyn Mitchell Yeldell  
October 2012

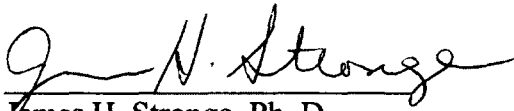
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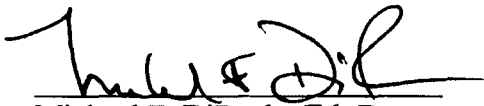
Karyn Mitchell Yeldell

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Approved October 9, 2012 by



James H. Stronge, Ph. D.  
Chair of Doctoral Committee



Michael F. DiPaola, Ed. D.



Kelly J. Whalon, Ph. D.

## DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

This research study was focused on teacher dispositions and practices that create positive teacher-student relationships with African-American elementary male students. Robert Pianta's work on relationships between teachers and students, over the past decade, provided a conceptual framework for this specific study. A review of the literature on this topic evidenced practices that positively and negatively impact teacher-student relationships. Through classroom observations and interviews, the perceptions of elementary teachers were examined on how they actually create teacher-student relationships with their African-American male students. These perceptions were insightful and often supported in the research literature. Effective teachers understand the need for praise, having high expectations, and provision of additional care and understanding for African-American male students. Although there is still a need for additional research to further explore teacher practices and the creation of positive teacher-student relationships in schools, there is assurance in the existence of teachers that implement practices that create a positive difference in the lives of African-American male students.

**KARYN MITCHELL YELDELL  
EDUCATIONAL POLICY PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP  
THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY IN VIRGINIA**

**DISPOSITIONS AND PRACTICES  
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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

**“Teachers must win their students’ hearts, while getting inside their students’ heads... one student at a time” (Beaty-O’Ferrall, Green & Hanna, 2010, p. 4).**

Academic achievement in elementary students is a composite of many factors, one of which is teacher-student relationships. Many educators have anecdotal stories they can recite about how one teacher, despite the many efforts of their colleagues, made a positive impact on a difficult student in their school. A critical element to students’ engagement and motivation in any subject area is their relationship with their teacher (Beaty-O’Ferrall, Green, & Hanna, 2010). Students’ sense of community, connection, and belonging to others has a positive effect on their learning, motivation, and engagement (Booker, 2006). Students prefer teachers who are perceived as encouraging and supportive of student learning by providing feedback to students that builds their confidence (Mansfield, Miller & Montalvo, 2007). Teachers who show respect and fairness towards students, set high expectations, and engage their students in learning are successful in maintaining positive student-teacher relationships. Additionally, these teachers are viewed in a positive manner by their students (Mansfield et.al.).

Black (2006) determined that teacher warmth and support has unparalleled power to help children adjust and achieve in school settings. Cooper (2003) shared the voice of African-American mothers, who offered firsthand accounts of the harm teachers can do when they do not embrace the belief that students from all backgrounds can learn and flourish. Participating mothers reported their children's lack of access to competent and caring public school teachers frustrated, angered, and concerned them the most; ushering many of them to the decision of exiting traditional public schools.

A study of 910 first-grade students, identified by their kindergarten teachers as having significant behavioral, social, and academic problems in the classroom were given emotional and academic support on a daily basis. By the end of the first grade, these children countered and disproved their kindergarten teachers' initial labels of behavioral, social, and academic problem by demonstrating success in the school setting (Black, 2006). Another study done by Black noted that 2,000 high school students were surveyed and participated in focus groups where the findings yielded that most low-achieving teens said they felt no connection to their school or teachers, and that they had given up on schoolwork and homework because they felt that no one cared about their performance (Black, 2006).

*The Act Policy Report* detailed how positive teacher-student relationships can affect students' educational expectations and even their postsecondary participation by providing them with information and learning experiences and helping them take

advantage of educational opportunities (Wimberly, 2002). The stated mission of the ACT Office of Policy Research is to inform policy makers and the public on important issues in education by providing timely information that can directly enhance knowledge, dialogue, and decision-making. This study, *School Relationships Foster Success for African American Students*, uses data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study and reflects ACT's interest in analyzing the critical issues affecting the preparation and diversity of students (Wimberly, 2002).

The quality of children's relationships with their teachers in the early grades has important implications for children's current and future academic and behavioral adjustment (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). Marseille (2009) argued, "the relationship between student and teacher provides a foundation on which deeply satisfying learning can be built" (p. 55). Educational expectations and postsecondary participation were higher among students who talked with their teachers and had positive feelings toward them. These interactions and positive feelings contributed to more cohesive teacher-student relationships (Wimberly, 2002).

Turman (2003) argued that students who develop positive interpersonal relationships with their teachers are more likely to have high involvement and interest in their subject matter. Verbal encouragement and verbal criticisms can have a significant influence on the teacher-student relationship (Simpson & Erickson, 1983). This need for positive relationships between teachers and students transcends educational level and, can be seen from elementary school through secondary educational settings (Wimberly, 2002).

Research done by Marseille (2009) demonstrated how the lack of a strong interpersonal relationship with teachers could possibly have a negative impact on student performance. Bishop, Berryman, & Richardson (as cited in Hattie, 2009) found that deficit thinking by teachers is particularly a problem when teachers are involved with minority students. The students, parents, and principals were able to see the relationships between teachers and students as having the greatest influence on students' educational achievement; however, in contrast the teachers identified the main influence on students' achievement were the students themselves, their homes, and the working conditions of the schools (Hattie, 2009). "One of the most frequently cited reasons students gave for leaving school prior to graduation was poor relationships with teachers" (Davis & Dupper, 2004, p. 183). Cornelius-White (2007) noted that most students who do not wish to come to school or who dislike school do so primarily because they do not like their teacher. He claimed that to "improve teacher-student relationships and reap their benefits, teachers should learn to facilitate students' development by demonstrating that they care for the learning of each student as a person...empathizing with students by seeing their perspective, communicate it back to them so that they have valuable feedback to self-assess, feel safe, and learn to understand others and the content with the same interest and concern" (p. 123).

When students have the perception that their teachers are deeply concerned and care about their performance and well-being, it has a positive impact on student achievement (Cornelius-White, 2007). Ladson-Billings (2009) opined that teachers who "believe that all of their students can succeed rather than that failure is inevitable for some... They help students make connections between their local, national, racial,

cultural, and global identities... Their relationships with students are fluid and equitable and extend beyond the classroom (p. 28). This need for developing positive teacher-student relationships influences not only academic achievement but also self-esteem and identity for African-American male elementary students.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Over the past 10 years, Pianta and his colleagues' body of research has consistently provided evidence that positive teacher-student relationships are fundamental to the healthy development of students in schools (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta, 1999). It is this evidence that supports the conceptual framework of this research study and outlines the importance and relevance of teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students in the classroom setting. Relationships between children and adults play a prominent role in the development of students' academic, social, and emotional competencies in the preschool, elementary, and middle school years (Hamre & Pianta, 2006; Pianta, 1999). Child-parent and child-teacher relationships impact peer relations, emotional development, self-regulation, and school behaviors such as attention, motivation, problem solving, and self-esteem (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Pianta & Harbers, 1996). Relationships with teachers may influence trajectories toward academic success or failure (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995).

In another study, Hamre and Pianta (2001) determined classroom support could help close racial and economic achievement gaps but "the odds are stacked against disadvantaged kids [because they are] more likely to land in poor quality classrooms with little support" (p.19). Teacher-student relationships vary in nature and quality. Some

teacher-student relationships could be described as close and affectionate, others as distant and formal, or even plagued with conflict (Howes & Matheson, 1992; Pianta et al., 1995). Hamre & Pianta (2001) stated that based on longitudinal study results, teacher-student relationships with kindergarteners have an effect on their achievement over the next eight years, controlling for relevant baseline child characteristics.

Positive student-teacher relationships assist and serve as a resource for students at risk of school failure (Ladd & Burgess, 2001). One of the groups of students at risk is African-American males. In 2008, African-American children ages 18 and under were three times more likely to live in single-parent households than Caucasian children (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010). In 2007, one out of every three African-American children lived in poverty compared with one out of every ten Caucasian children (Lewis et al). The 2010 Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males illuminated that African-American male students are not given the same opportunities to participate in classes offering enriched educational offerings; are twice as likely to be classified as having a learning disability as Caucasian counterparts; receive out of school suspensions twice as often as Caucasian male students, are expelled three times more than Caucasian male students, and are enrolled in advanced placement math and science classes at a rate of four times less than their Caucasian male counterparts (Holzman, 2010).

Statistics like the ones shown above further explain why student-teacher relationships are notably crucial for African-American male students and support why these students are at risk of academic failure. One study, examining children at academic risk for referral to special education or retention indicated that having a positive teacher-

student relationship impacted these children in such a manner that despite predictions of retention or referral, were ultimately promoted or not referred to special education (Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995; Hamre & Pianta, 2006, p.49). Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell (2003) evidenced that among a group of aggressive African-American and Hispanic students, supportive student-teacher relationships were associated with declines in aggressive behavior between second and third grade. Yet, because African-American male students are often taught by teachers from different cultural backgrounds which can create or hinder that teacher-student relationship low-income African-American students seldom receive instruction from teachers who share their cultural framework, creating an increase in cultural misunderstandings based on race, ethnicity and social class, impacting their teacher-student relationships (Monroe (2005).

Teachers' perceptions of students may positively or negatively impact teacher-student relationships in schools. Jerome, Hamre, & Pianta (2009) conducted a study to assess teacher-student relationships using the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) in kindergarten through sixth grade. The STRS (Pianta, 2001) is a self-reported measure of teacher perceptions of levels of closeness and conflicts that they experience in their relationships with individual students. A sample of 878 children participated in this study of which 49% were male and 11% were identified by parents as Black. However, the findings suggested that different teachers' perceptions of conflict with a given child are more consistent over time than their perceptions of closeness. "Another possibility is that communication between teachers has an effect on teacher ratings of conflict and closeness. For example, new teachers may already hold biases toward new students based on information obtained from other teachers. [Therefore] when teachers rate

relationship quality, they might take into account not only their own perceptions of students, but also other teachers' perceptions of those students" (Jerome, Hamre, & Pianta, 2009, p. 933).

Conflict between teachers and children is one dimension of relationships consistently identified by teachers (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992). One of the strongest correlates of teachers' perceptions of conflict is their perceptions of these students' problem behaviors (Hamre, Pianta, Downer, & Mashburn, 2008). Conflict ratings made by teachers are consistently related to a variety of students' social and academic outcomes in elementary school (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003). Teachers are often in conflict with students who show problem behavior in the classroom, making it necessary to draw distinctions between conflict and problem behaviors.

Pianta's (1999) model of student-teacher relationships posits that teachers' perceptions about their relationships with students are comprised of different components that include individuals' personality, temperament, and beliefs, interactions between individuals, and the larger classroom and school context. "Teachers' judgments about relationships with students are fully embedded in their interactions in classroom settings and for this reason these relationships function as an important marker of school adaptation, above and beyond students' problem behaviors" (Hamre, Pianta, Downer, & Mashburn, 2008, p. 116).

Social relationships are highly valued among African-American adolescents, and the failure to connect personally with them erodes the teacher-student relationship (Day-Vines, 2000). Several studies report that teachers describe higher levels of conflict with



African-American children although this effect is controlled by the ethnic match of teachers and students (Ladd & Burgess, 2001; Saft & Pianta, 2001); levels of conflict between African-American students and their teachers are not higher when described by African-American teachers (Saft & Pianta, 2001). There is evidence that children with lower academic competence and lower levels of socioeconomic status are likely to have more conflict with their teachers (Ladd & Burgess, 2001).

Relationships with teachers are a foundational component of young children's experiences in school that show promise for promoting adjustment and learning (Hamre, et al., 2008). The research suggests that strong interpersonal teacher relationships with students, especially African-American males, have a positive impact on their schooling experience. Therefore, this conceptual framework is the undergirding for this case study on the practices that promote teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this multi-case study is to illuminate the classroom teacher practices that encourage a climate where teacher-student relationships may be forged with African-American male elementary students. African-American male elementary students are the focus of this study, as they are historically a highly stigmatized ethnic student group. Through qualitative research, this study focused on how elementary teachers described practices that they have implemented to forge teacher-student relationships with African-American male students in their classrooms.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions addressed in this research study include:

1. What are the key dispositions exhibited by teachers who form successful teacher-student relationships in the elementary classroom setting?
2. What are the key dispositions exhibited by teachers who form positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students?
3. What are teacher practices in working with all students in their classes, including African American male students, for teachers who demonstrate positive teacher-student relationships?

## **Significance of the Study**

Beatty-O'Ferrall, Green, and Hanna (2010) characterize effective teacher-student relationships as those demonstrating positive behaviors, strategies, and fundamental attitudes. Hamre & Pianta (2001) stated that relationships that teachers have with kindergarteners effects their achievement over the next eight years, controlling for relevant baseline child characteristics. This study is significant due to the impact that teachers can have on the academic achievement, self-esteem, and overall growth of elementary students.

Students' perceptions about their teachers affect their achievement and have the power to build or destroy a teacher-student relationship. "Students desire authentic relationships where they are trusted, given responsibility, spoken to honestly and warmly, and treated with dignity" (Marseille, 2009, p.65). In sum, students often mirror the respect, or lack of respect, given to them by their teachers (Marseille, 2009). A teacher's

expectations, beliefs, and behaviors towards a student can have a positive or negative impact on the student-teacher relationship (Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004). Houston, King & Middleton (2001) posited that today's schools need to create an environment where students feel affirmed and validated as persons even as they face challenges to their belief system. Teachers must construct climates in their classrooms where students can express confusion, discomfort, anger, and even fear while knowing that they will be treated with dignity and respect.

By discovering effective practices in building positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male students, teachers may be able to reach students that may have previously been deemed unreachable. According to Simpson and Erickson (1983), African American males perceived their teachers as less friendly and believed that they were treated less favorably than other students and had the least positive view of their teacher (Levy, Brok, Wubbels, & Brekelmans, 2003). Students spend a tremendous amount of time with their classroom teachers both in academic and non-academic settings, and although this environment has great potential for creating positive interpersonal relationships, African-American students could only identify a relatively low number of teachers with whom they felt they had developed close relationships (Levy et al., 2003). This study examined teachers' classroom practices that create positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

*Academic achievement* – Having overall success in the school setting that includes receiving passing grades and assessment scores that meet school-wide and division-wide criteria. (Battle & Scott, 2000; Davis, 2003).

*Achievement gap* – An achievement gap refers to the observed disparity of scores on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Barone, 2006).

*Positive teacher-student relationships* – Relationships that have low levels of conflict, high levels of closeness, and the ability of teachers to create an environment that supports students emotionally, socially, and cognitively (Fredricksen, Blumenfield & Paris, 2004).

*Student Culture* – The set of norms, values, standards, and beliefs taught to and learned by students from interactions with members of the student's home environment (Gay, 2000).

*School Culture*– The culture found in school systems that are based on the shared beliefs of administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the school's surrounding community. This culture is ingrained in the structure, ethos, programs, and etiquette of today's schools and is considered simply the "normal" and "right" thing to do; and often does not include links to diversity and ethnicity (Gay, 2000).

*Teacher Dispositions* – "Patterns of behavior that are exhibited frequently and intentionally in the absence of coercion, representing a habit of mind; the cultivation of habits of mind necessary to effective teaching" (Thornton, 2006, p. 54).

*Teacher Practices* – Methods of delivering instruction that embodies knowledge of pedagogy and research based experiences (Milner, 2009).

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was limited by a myriad of factors impacting the data that were collected and analyzed. The literature review was limited by the quantity of existing research that is specific to just African-American male elementary students. The selected participants agreed to voluntarily participate in this study. The interview and observation times of the study were restricted by the availability of the participants. The observations in the classrooms were limited to instructional time when the teachers were able to verbally and physically interact with their African-American elementary male students. Each classroom teacher that was interviewed and observed had knowledge of the identity of the researcher.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

This study did not examine the teacher perceptions of preschool teachers, secondary teachers, and collegiate level instructors. This study focused on practices that promote teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students. Initially, the scope of this study will be limited to African-American male elementary students, excluding all female students or students that are non-African-American. However, due to the nature of whole group instruction, especially in kindergarten through second grade, non-African-American students were observed and discussed during interviews. Elementary teachers who do not presently have African-American male students in their classrooms were excluded from this study. Elementary teachers who did not complete the STRS were excluded from the study. Participants' STRS ratings that

did not reflect high levels of closeness or low levels of conflict were excluded from this study also.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of Related Research Literature on Practices that Impact Teacher-Student Relationships with African-American Male Elementary Students**

This chapter is a review of research literature on practices, both positive and negative, that impact teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students. The beginning of the chapter unfolds with the impact of socio-economic status and the rejection of cultural values on student achievement. This is followed by research on specific negative teacher practices that cause harm to teacher-student relationships, especially those with minority students, thus having a negative impact on students' achievement levels and self-image. Next, research on the impact of certain positive teacher practices on student achievement and self-esteem is discussed. Finally, the chapter ends with a brief summary of the research noted on practices that forge teacher-student relationships.

#### **Socioeconomic Status and Cultural Rejection**

Bakker, Denessen & Brus-Laeven (2007) cited in their review of the literature that there is a relationship between school achievement of pupils and their socio-economic background, particularly in primary schools.

Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds generally show higher levels of academic achievement than their counterparts from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This finding also applies to reading, spelling, and math academic achievement equally. Noguera (2003) discussed the effects of growing up in poverty on academic achievement; especially given that one third of Black children are raised in a poor household. "Poor children generally receive inferior services from schools and agencies that are located in the inner city, and poor children often have many unmet basic needs. This combination of risk factors means it is nearly impossible to establish cause and effect relationships among them" (Noguera, 2003, p. 436).

The National Center for Education Statistics (2007) noted that minorities made up 42% of public prekindergarten through secondary school enrollment in 2004. The percentage of minority enrollment in individual states, however, ranged from 95% in the District of Columbia to 4% in Vermont. The National Center for Education Statistics (1997, 2001) cited that although youths of color account for 68% of the student population in 100 of the nation's largest school districts, approximately 87% of all teachers are White. Teachers play a pivotal role in reversing the negative academic and social behaviors of students of color, but they, too, are predisposed to internalizing and projecting the negative stereotypes and myths that are unfairly used to describe these students as hopeless and unsuccessful (Garibaldi, 1992). Teachers, who ascribe to these beliefs, must change their subjective attitudes about the success of minority students to be



effective. Their encouragement can greatly enhance the beliefs of all students the importance and value of education for long-term success but, especially for minority youths (Garibaldi, 1992).

Culture is a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others (Gay, 2000). The culture found in school systems is based on the shared beliefs of administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the school's surrounding community. This "cultural fabric," primarily of European and middle-class origins, is so deeply ingrained in the structures, ethos, programs, and etiquette of today's schools that it is considered simply the "normal" and "right" thing to do; and often the "cultural fabric" of schools does not entwine the threads of diversity and ethnicity (p. 9).

According to research by Irvine, Armento, Causey, Jones, Frasher, & Weinburgh (2001), African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and students from poverty, have cultural values, beliefs, and norms about school that are incongruous with many middle class Caucasian cultural norms and behaviors about schools. Irvine and colleagues suggested that when a student's culture is rejected and/or not recognized, this creates a plethora of negative experiences and perceptions that can include suffering from psychological discomfort, low academic achievement, miscommunication, confrontations between student, teacher, and home, diminished self-esteem, and eventually school failure (Irvine et. al).

### **Impact of Teacher-Student Relationships**

Good student-teacher relationships are defined as having low levels of conflict, high levels of closeness, and teacher-created environments that comprehensively support

students emotionally, socially, and cognitively (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Beaty-O’Ferrall, Green & Hanna (2010) characterized effective teacher-student relationships by teacher demonstrated behaviors, strategies, and fundamental attitudes. To build these types of relationships with students, teachers must take personal interest in students; establish clear learning goals, and model assertive, equitable, and positive behaviors (Beaty-O’Ferrall, et al).

Teacher-student relationships can affect students’ educational expectations and even their postsecondary participation by providing them with information and learning experiences and by helping them take advantage of educational opportunities (Wimberly, 2000). The quality of children’s relationships with their teachers in the early grades has important implications for children’s concurrent and future academic and behavioral adjustment (Hughes & Kwok, 2007).

### **Need for Teacher-Student Relationships for African-American Male Students**

Currently, nearly two-thirds of all African-American children live in a single-parent household (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010). In 2008, one-third of African-American children had a parent with a high school diploma, 24% had a parent with at least some college experience, and less than 15% had a parent who held a bachelor’s degree (Lewis et. al). These statistics highlight many of the challenges faced by African-American male students thus, supporting their need for positive relationships with their elementary teachers.

Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), revealed that African-American male students from large cities, where the populations exceed 250,000 people, who were not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch had reading and

math scores similar to or lower than those of Caucasian males who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). This statistic shows that socioeconomically challenged Caucasian males fared better academically than African-American male students who did not have economical obstacles. Contrastingly, Bakker, Denessen & Brus-Laeven (2007) found that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement compared to their counterparts from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. African-American male elementary students are in need of positive teacher-student relationships as a means for countering low academic achievement in school.

The National Center for Education Statistics maintained data on a cohort of male students graduating in the school year 2007-2008 across all fifty states in the United States (NCES, 2010). These cohort data exposed that African-American male students had a graduation rate of 49% compared to 73% for Caucasian male students demonstrating a 24% gap in the state of Virginia. In the majority of U.S. states, districts, communities and schools, the necessary conditions for African-American males to systemically succeed in education do not exist at the same rate as Caucasian males, if they exist at all (Holzman, 2010). The disparities between educational practices listed above further necessitate positive teacher-student relationships for African-American male elementary students.

Tenenbaum's and Ruck's (2007) research found that teachers had more positive expectations for Caucasian students compared to minority students ( $d=0.23$ ; Hispanic  $d=0.46$ , African-American  $d=0.25$ , Asian  $d=-0.17$ ), with the effects greatest in elementary compared to high school and college settings (Hattie, 2009). Further,

teachers were more likely to make negative assignments, such as special education or disciplinary actions, for ethnic minorities and direct more positive or neutral speech to Caucasian students (Hattie, 2009). Cooper and Allen (1997) investigated the effects of race on the classroom experiences of Caucasian and minority students, which indicated that minority students have different types of interactions with teachers. In fact, there were more negative statements made by teachers to non-Caucasian students, Caucasian students received more praise, and overall minority students had fewer interactions with teachers compared to their Caucasian counterparts (Hattie, 2009).

This literature review examined teacher practices that create both positive and negative teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students, in support of the purpose of the study (See Tables 1 and 2). Students of historically stigmatized ethnic groups and those having a low socioeconomic status (SES) are the diverse populations chiefly looked at in the research discussed. Darling-Hammond and Post (2000) and Fueyo and Bechtol (1999) noted that the growth of culturally diverse student populations in public schools over the past decade coincides with decreased student achievement rates along with the amount of qualified and certified teachers in urban schools.

It seems necessary that teachers in public schools must accept their share of responsibility for the academic success of all students, which requires that they become culturally sensitive and confident in their own ability to adequately teach diverse learners. Thus, teachers must not only hone their pedagogical skills but also build nurturing relationships with all of their students by gaining understanding of diverse racial, ethnic,

and class backgrounds (Bartolome & Trueba, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 1997; Fueyo & Bechtol, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Cooper's (2003) qualitative study explored how culturally diverse students are more susceptible to being harmed by teachers who are biased against their racial, class, gender, and family backgrounds. Noguera (2003) discussed a case study on four 11<sup>th</sup> - grade African-American students enrolled in an advanced placement English class approached a writing assignment on *Huckleberry Finn* at an urban school in the Bay Area. These four students were already isolated from their Black peers by their placement in this honors course. Two of the Black males objected to the use of the word "nigger" throughout the novel but were told by the teacher that if they insisted on making it an issue that they would have to leave the course. They did opt to leave the course, resulting in them having to take another course that did not meet college preparatory requirements. One Black male decided to just "tell the teacher what she wanted to hear" because he needed the class. The fourth Black student, a female, decided to stay in the class but wrote a paper focused on race and racial injustice, even though she knew it might result in her being penalized by the teacher. Black students are confronted by organizational practices, which disproportionately place Black students in marginal roles and groupings, increase pressure from their peers, and may undermine the importance attached to academic achievement. The teacher mentioned in this case may or may not have even realized how her actions in relation to the curriculum led her Black students to make choices that would have a significant impact on their education.

## **Teacher Practices that Lead to Negative Teacher-Student Relationships**

“To be Black and male in American schools places one at risk for a variety of negative consequences: school failure, special education assignment, suspensions, expulsions, and violence” (Davis, 2003, p. 518). African-American male students are not represented in gifted education at the same rate as their Caucasian counterparts coupled with being overrepresented in special education compared to their Caucasian counterparts as indicated by statistics in the 2004 Schott Foundation on Public Education report (Milner, 2009, p. 7). Cultural messages about Black males and how they are negatively constructed in the media and perceived in everyday life are cited as a possible rationale for the education crisis of Black boys (Davis, 2003). These images depict the Black male as “violent, disrespectful, unintelligent, hyper-sexualized, and threatening. These cultural messages, without a doubt, carry over into schools and negatively influence the way young Black male students are treated, positioned, and distributed opportunities to learn” (Davis, 2003, p. 520). Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson (2002) analyzed disciplinary records of 11,001 students in 19 middle schools in a large, urban Midwestern public school district...that “pointed out that students of color, and particularly African American male students, overwhelmingly received harsher punishments for misbehavior than did their White counterparts” (p. 317).

Rogers and Renard (1999) asserted that “we need to understand the needs and beliefs of our students as they are, not as we think they ought to be” (p. 34). Cultural discontinuities between the home and school culture can affect a child’s academic achievement. Research suggests that limited teacher understanding of cultures outside of their own and unexamined prejudices about people from other ethnic groups are areas

that must be addressed in order to implement culturally responsive practices (Chubbuck, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Garibaldi, 1992; Gay, 2000; Howard, 1999; Monroe, 2005; Ogbu, 1990). The issue is further complicated by the Euro-American influences found and provided for teachers in the school curriculum, methods, and materials that tend to ignore the background and experiences of other cultures in the presentation of information. The majority of educators identify with the middle class socioeconomically which starkly contrasts the socioeconomic norms of many poverty entrenched urban students (Monroe, 2005).

Gay (2000) opined that during general dialogue, many African-Americans engage in very spontaneous and interactive communication styles that do not require turn taking or permission from others to speak. This African-American cultural feature can cause problems within the classroom setting for African-American students, because European culture dictates sequential versus simultaneous patterns of interaction. Day-Vines and Day-Hairston (2005) posited that this discourse manner amongst African-American students may be regarded as impulsive and can create considerable dismay for individuals unfamiliar with African-American culture (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Rogers & Renard, 1999). Beaty-O’Ferrall et al (2010) professed that teachers must overcome cultural barriers when they encounter students outside of their cultural realm and form strong teacher-student relationships. They stated that these barriers exist due to a “fear of the culturally different, a lack of knowledge about the differences and similarities between cultures, persistent negative stereotyping, and general intolerance” (p. 8).

Montgomery (2001) raised the issue of the limited teachers understanding of cultures other than their own. This lack of cultural awareness leads to the differential

treatment of students solely based on different cultural orientations and unexamined prejudices about people from other ethnic groups (Montgomery, 2001). Darling-Hammond & Post (2000) conjectured that students of color, and those with limited English skills, are likely to have White, middle class teachers who have had very different life experiences. Cultural relativism opposes ethnocentrism. Cultural relativism means not assuming that one's own culture is superior, coupled with the expectation that persons from cultures different from one's own may show attitudes and behaviors that one may find surprising (Darling-Hammond & Post, 2000). In addition, it means that behaviors that members of one culture view positively, including skills they regard as social competencies, may be ineffectual, neutral, or even offensive in the context of a different culture. Misunderstandings between cultural groups can easily occur because many cultural characteristics are subtle and therefore difficult to identify or articulate, even by native members of the culture (Darling-Hammond & Post, 2000).

**Racism & Teacher Stereotypes.** Students from ethnic minorities are often treated differently by teachers (McEwan, 2003). A teaching and support staff that is not culturally competent will lack knowledge about different ethnic groups or even be aware of their individual biases; and will have limited skills to problem solve when interacting with other cultures, or to implement changes within the educational environment (Mayo, 2010). The social, economic, and cultural gaps between African-American students and their teachers may make it difficult for students to form cohesive relationships.

Extrapolating from a study related to Mexican-American students, teacher-student interactions yielded the results that Mexican-American students experienced more interactions with their teachers than their Caucasian counterparts, only in the areas of



giving directions and criticism; however, the Caucasian students experienced more interactions in all the positive categories (McEwan, 2003).

Positive relations with teachers in the classroom and between home and school appear to be less common for low-income and racial minority children compared to higher income Caucasian students (Hughes & Kwok, 2007).. The ethnic imbalance between teachers and students, due to the demographic makeup of the teacher workforce in the United States, may be related to teachers being less attuned to children of a different racial background, less accurate in interpreting their behavior and performance, and less responsive to their needs. (Hughes & Kwok, 2007).

Love (2002) noted that when teachers are not prepared to guide the healthy development of diverse students, those of a descent other than that of the dominant culture (White western European), the children's learning suffers and achievement diminishes. One explanation for teachers' differing expectations and judgments of student achievement by ethnicity may be based on teachers adhering to societal stereotypes (Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2006). Children become aware of physical differences related to race quite early, even when teachers do not speak explicitly about race and racial issues with children (Tronyna & Carington, 1990 cited in Noguera 2003). "However, children do not become aware of the significance attached to these physical differences until they start to understand the ideological dimensions of race and become cognizant of differential treatment that appears to be based on race" (Miles, 1989 cited in Noguera, 2003, p. 443).

Ladson-Billings (2009) suggested that assumptions teachers have about their students' impact the delivery of instruction to students. The teacher may assume that

because of poverty, language, or culture that the minority students bring nothing of value to the classroom environment. As a result of this assumption, the relationship between the teacher and the minority students becomes hierarchical and authoritative (Ladson-Billings, 2009). The teacher's role is authoritarian and all knowing, while the student's role is to follow the instructions given and never ask questions. "Even when teachers endorse superficially more equitable classroom relations, they sometimes continue to marginalize and poorly serve students of color" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 60). Eighty-six percent of the participants in Cooper's (2000) study maintained that public school teachers consistently stigmatize and discriminate against inner-city school children based on their biased beliefs and assumptions. The teachers' negative views often related to the students' racial and class backgrounds, or the fact that many are reared in single-parent households or by alternative caregivers.

Teachers perceive ethnic minority parents as being less cooperative and less involved compared to Caucasian parents (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). "Teachers and principals tend to attribute lower levels of parent involvement among ethnic minority parents to a lack of motivation to cooperate, a lack of concern for their children's education, and a lower value placed on education" (p. 41). Teachers may endorse ethnic or racial stereotypes about children, ultimately influencing their feelings toward students and their parents leading to self-fulfilling prophecies (Hughes & Kwok, 2007).

Bakker, Dennessen & Brus-Laeven (2007) conducted a study to gain insight into teacher perceptions of parental involvement and possible associations between teacher perceptions and student achievement. This study sampled 60 elementary school teachers from 26 schools in a mixed urban/rural area in the eastern part of The Netherlands. The

teachers and parents were asked to complete various questionnaires, and student data were gathered in the areas of spelling, vocabulary, math and reading comprehension. Their study noted that the involvement of lower SES parents in the education of their children differs from the involvement of middle or higher SES parents, often making their involvement incongruous with expectations of academic facilities. Participation in school-based activities and parent-teacher contacts are deemed the gold standard for parental involvement according to school staff and policymakers (Bakker et al.)

Unfortunately, this translates into lower SES parents being regarded as uninterested in their children's academic career, leading to teachers assuming there is a parental deficit and believing that low SES parents shoulder the blame for the underachievement on the part of certain pupils (Bakker, et al, 2007). The actual level of pupil achievement has been shown to be affected by teacher perceptions of pupils' backgrounds, and influenced by the perceptions that teachers have of students based on the level of their parents' involvement. The analyzed data from this study revealed a correlation between teacher perceptions of parental involvement and the spelling and reading comprehension scores of students (Bakker et al).

The structure and culture of school perpetuates, reinforces, and maintains racial categories and the stereotypes associated with them by sorting students by perceived measures of their ability and as they single out certain children for discipline, implicit and explicit messages about racial and gender identities are conveyed (Noguera, 2003). Such messages are conveyed even when responsible adults attempt to be fair in their handling of student class assignments and disciplinary actions. "Because the outcomes of such practices often closely resemble larger patterns of success and failure that correspond

with racial differences in American society, they invariably have the effect of reinforcing existing attitudes and beliefs about the nature and significance of race” (Noguera, 2003, p. 445).

**Low Expectations.** McEwan (2003) stated that research has shown that teachers interact differently to low-achieving students compared to high-achieving students, through the level and quantity of praise and approval provided. “Children perceived as low achievers received fewer reading turns, fewer opportunities to answer open or direct questions, [and] fewer opportunities to make recitations...” (McEwan, 2003, p. 50). Research on teacher expectations has demonstrated that, academically, the students in the bottom third of the class receive significantly lower expectations to achieve, and much less encouragement, from many teachers (Rist, 2000). Conversely, students in the top third of the class get the most teacher attention and encouragement (Rist, 2000).

In 1970, Ray Rist wrote an article entitled “Student Social Class and Teacher Expectations: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy in Ghetto Education.” In this article, Rist described his research project documenting the ways in which teacher expectations work to lower the academic achievement of some students. In 2000, the Editorial Board of the Harvard Educational Review decided to reprint the article as part of the Harvard Educational Review (HER) Classics Series to spark awareness of the importance of creating a just and equitable educational experience for all children. Rist (2000) reported the results of a longitudinal study spanning two and one-half years of one class of African-American students during their kindergarten, first- and second-grade years. This study revealed, “the development of expectations by the kindergarten teacher as to the differential academic potential and capability of any student was significantly determined

by a series of subjectively interpreted attributes and characteristics of that student” (Rist, 2000, p. 263). The kindergarten students were divided into two major groups, those termed by the teacher as “fast learners,” were expected to succeed and those termed by the teacher as “slow learners,” were anticipated to fail. The differential treatment of the students was based on the student’s teacher-designated group assignments (Rist, 2000).

Tauber (1998) discussed how teachers form expectations and assign labels to students based on characteristics such as body build, race, socioeconomic levels, ethnicity, gender, given name and/or surname, attractiveness, and other subjective features that individually and collectively impact the treatment of those students. Hattie (2009) referenced Smith’s (1980) research study that found that when labeling information on pupil ability is given to teachers, they reliably rate student ability, achievement, and behavior according to the provided information; and more teaching opportunities were given to students for whom there was a favorable expectation.

Research on teacher expectations suggested that teachers use subtle ways to communicate lower expectations for certain students, limiting their achievement, while clearly articulated high expectations can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Stronge, 2002). Rist (2000) noted that students who were labeled as unsuccessful in his longitudinal study of African American students, were seated the furthest from the blackboard as a penalty; compared to their peers who were deemed successful and enjoyed the teacher writing mathematical problems and illustrations on the blackboard in front of their table.

A primary way in which teachers’ expectations mediate student achievement is through opportunity to learn. Minority students are not given the opportunities to

enhance their learning afforded to their Caucasian counterparts (Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2006). It has been suggested that minority group students are more susceptible to teachers' low expectations than Caucasian students and this may serve to further widen the achievement gap when such students accept and confirm teachers' negative expectations (Rubie-Davies, et al).

Villegas & Lucas (2002) discussed research on how teachers from mainstream backgrounds view student diversity as an obstacle rather than a resource to build upon and that they hold low expectations for poor students of color. Ford and Grantham (2003) maintained that the deficit perspective about diverse students held by educators is the reason for the underrepresentation of diverse students in gifted education. "Deficit thinking exists when educators hold negative, stereotypic and counterproductive views about culturally diverse students and lower their expectation of these students" (Ford & Grantham, 2003, p. 217).

Students are knowledgeable of their teacher's expectations for their academic performance, especially in classrooms where teachers significantly differentiate their interactions and communication context with their students (Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2006). Students expect their teachers not to allow ethnicity, gender, or other demographic factors to affect their treatment or expectations of students (Stronge, 2007). Research by Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton showed that teachers' expectations also can be influenced more by social class than race or ethnicity (2006). Because a large percentage of African-American students attend schools in the poorest areas, teachers' expectations for those students may be connected more to their social class than their ethnicity, or perhaps a combination of the two factors (Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton,

2006). “Effective teachers care about their students’ academic well-being and seek to help all students succeed, including at-risk students. They hold high expectations for their students and provide support for reaching those expectations by motivating students to learn and providing encouragement” (Stronge, 2007, p.32).

Love (2002) found a correlation between teachers’ beliefs and students’ outcomes in her study on the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and student achievement. However, the study did not delve into how teacher beliefs manifest in actual classroom discourse, classroom interaction, and in the learning environment in general. This research did illuminate that students are exposed to teachers’ beliefs year after year, in an accumulated fashion, yielding an impact on student achievement (Love, 2002).

**Self -Fulfilling Prophecy.** Sociologist Robert K. Merton coined the term “self-fulfilling prophecy” and developed the following five-step model to explain this construct: (1) the teacher forms expectations (2) based upon these expectations, the teacher acts in a differential manner (3) the teacher’s treatment tells each student, loud and clear, what behavior and what achievement the teacher expects (4) if this treatment is consistent, it will tend to shape the student’s behavior and achievement (5) with time, the student’s behavior and achievement will conform more and more closely to that expected of him or her (Tauber, 1998, p. 4).

“Students who expect to fail frequently do; just as there is a self-fulfilling prophecy when teachers have low expectations for students...” (DiPaola & Hoy, 2008, p.69). Teachers’ belief that students can learn has the ability to propel them into learning (Stronge, 2002). “Unfortunately, this self-fulfilling prophecy works both ways...If a teacher believes that students are low-performing, unreachable, and unable to learn, the

students perform poorly, seem unreachable, and do not learn” (p. 37). Community-based “folk theories” suggest that because of the history of discrimination against Black people, that no quantity of hard work will ever reap rewards equivalent to Whites, could contribute to self-defeating behaviors (Ogbu, 1987 as cited in Noguera 2003).

Self-fulfilling prophecies may occur because teachers behave differently toward high- and low performing students (Harber & Jussim, 2005). In a meta-analysis conducted by Jussim & Harberin 2005, 35 years of empirical research on teacher expectations justified the conclusion that powerful self-fulfilling prophecies selectively occur among students from stigmatized social groups. Additionally, teacher expectations may predict student outcomes more because these expectations are accurate mainly because they become self-fulfilling. “When teacher perceptions of parental involvement are less than accurate...the differential teacher-pupil interactions arising from such mistaken teacher perceptions can actually become a self-fulfilling prophecy” (Bakker, Brus-Laeven & Dennessen, 2007, p. 189).

The effects of teacher expectations may be categorized as self-fulfilling prophecy effects on student achievement (Rubie-Davies, Hattie & Hamilton, 2006). These effects are sustained when teachers expect students to act or perform based on previously established patterns and disregard any evidence of change that contradicts the pre-decided path. Cooper (2003) discussed how teachers judge and treat students directly influences their educational and emotional development, how students are labeled, and ultimately access educational resources. Culture or power functions within classrooms, whereby teachers expect students to follow “codes” or implicit rules that embody the values, culture, and norms of middle class Whites (Delpit, 1995 cited in Cooper, 2003).



Particular aspects of teacher behaviors act to prolong student performance levels due to their inability to accept changed student behavior (Rubie-Davies, Hattie & Hamilton, 2006). The major self-fulfilling prophecy effects are known as Golem effects and Galatea effects. Golem effects are undesirable and have negative effects and lower teacher expectations that negatively impede student academic achievement. Galatea effects are desirable, have positive effects, and result of high teacher expectations that enhance student academic achievement (Rubie-Davies, Hattie & Hamilton, 2006).

Ladson-Billings (2009) suggested that tracking of students, using arbitrary criteria, is still a common practice in schools and it occurs as soon as children enter school. Students, who fail to look, talk, or act as the teacher does are in danger of being placed in the lowest tracks. Placement in these low tracks is likely to mean less attention and individualized instruction from the teacher opined Ladson-Billings (2009, p. 64).

Rist (2000) concluded from his longitudinal study of one class of African-American students, that the kindergarten teacher placed students in groups using four major criteria. The first criterion was physical appearance of the child. The children at Table One were all dressed in clothes that were clean, ironed, and appeared new. While most of the children at Tables Two and Three, with only one exception, were all poorly dressed. The second criterion that appeared to differentiate the children at the various tables was their interactional behavior, both among themselves and with the teacher. Table One students showed strong leadership qualities and displayed considerable ease in their interactions with the teacher and would crowd in close proximity to her. The children at the other two tables would often linger on the outside edge of groups surrounding the teacher. The third criterion for student differentiation was the use of

language within the classroom. The children placed at the first table displayed a greater use of standard American English in the classroom compared to their peers at the other tables, who most often responded to the teacher in a cultural dialect and infrequently used “school language” (p. 8). The final criterion by which children were placed at Table One was a series of social factors that were known to the teacher prior to her seating of the children. Rist (2000) perceived that the teacher did not randomly assign the children to the various tables but made evaluative judgments of the expected academic capabilities of the children, after eight days of school, based on her construct of success, developed from her educated, middle-class value system.

In a kind of self-fulfilling way, these students perform at lower levels due to minimal instruction and less attention from their teachers. Thus they continue a cycle of poor academic achievement initiated by teacher bias and predispositions (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Teacher efficacy is also related to attitudes and perceived abilities in working with diverse students (Mayo, 2010). Teachers already engaged in teaching diverse African-American students reported lower efficacy for teaching these students, as cited in a study described by Mayo (2010). Hattie (2009) discussed the results of Rosenthal and Rubin’s 345 experiments on interpersonal expectancy effects that found that the effect of interpersonal expectations or self-fulfilling prophecies was as significant in everyday life situations as they were in laboratory settings. The implication in education is that it is more likely that students will reach the expected outcome predetermined by their teachers.

The “Pygmalion effect” usually refers to the fact that people, often children, students or employees, tend to live up to the expectations placed upon them by superiors

and do better when treated as if they are capable of success (Chang, 2011, p. 198). However, positive teacher expectations do not necessarily result in high student achievement. Student motivation, enthusiasm and achievement are influenced by multiple factors besides teacher expectation (Chang, 2011). A case study on an observed group of 47 first-year learners majoring in thermodynamics resulted in the “anti-Pygmalion-effect” when “positive teacher expectations accompanied by false judgment of students’ autonomy, enforcing (on-line) learning requirement and improper design of test papers, can lead to an astonishing result of poor gains of students (Chang, 2011, p. 199).”

**Table 1. Summary of negative factors that impact teacher-student relationships.**

Negative Impact	Author, Copyright, Type of Study	Summary
	McEwan (2003) Empirical	Minorities are treated differently by teachers.
	Mayo (2010) Empirical	Lack of cultural competence leads to limited problem solving skills when dealing with minority students.
	Hughes & Kwok (2007) Empirical	Positive relations with teachers in class, and between home and school, appear less common for low-income and racially minority children compared to their Caucasian counterparts.
	Love (2002) Empirical	Teachers that are not prepared to guide the development of diversity within their students, negatively impact their learning.
	Rubie-Davies, Hattie & Hamilton (2006) Empirical	Teachers adhering to societal stereotypes offer an explanation for teachers' differing expectations and judgments of student achievement.
	Tronya & Carington, 1990, as cited in Noguera, 2003 Empirical	Children become aware of physical differences related to race quite early.
	Miles, 1989, as cited in Noguera, 2003 Empirical	Children are unaware of the significance attached to physical differences until they understand the dimensions of race.

	Bakker, Brus-Laeven & Dennessen (2007) Empirical	The involvement of lower SES parents in education of their children differs from the involvement of middle or higher SES parents, as perceived by educators.
	Houston, King & Middleton (2001) Positional	Schools discriminate against those who have historically been disadvantaged.
	Ladson-Billings (2009) Positional	Teachers' assumptions about their students impact the delivery of instruction to students.
Low Expectations	McEwan (2003) Empirical	Teachers interact differently to low-achieving students compared to high-achieving students.
	Rist (2000) Empirical	Results of a longitudinal study revealed ways in which teacher expectations work to lower the academic achievement of some students.
	Tauber (1998) Empirical	Teachers form expectations and assign labels to students based on a myriad of characteristics that individually and collectively impact the treatment of those students.
	Stronge (2002); Stronge (2007) Empirical	Teachers use subtle ways to communicate low or high expectations for certain students, which can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Effective teachers maintain high expectations for their students regardless of their race, ethnicity, or economic status.
	Rubie-Davies, Hattie & Hamilton (2006) Empirical	Students are knowledgeable of their teachers' expectations for their academic performance; and these teacher expectations can also be influenced more by social class than race or ethnicity.
	Milner (2009) Empirical	The underrepresentation of diverse students in gifted education may be a function of educators holding a deficit

		perspective about diverse students.
	Love (2002) Empirical	Study results found a correlation between teachers' beliefs and student outcomes.
Self-Fulfilling Prophecy	DiPaola & Hoy (2008) Empirical	Students and teachers with low expectations can create a self-fulfilling prophecy.
	Stronge (2002) Empirical	Teachers' beliefs that students can learn have the ability to propel them into learning.
	Harber & Jussim (2005) Empirical	Self-fulfilling prophecies may occur because teachers behave differently toward high- and low-performing students.
	Bakker, Brus-Laeven & Dennessen (2007) Empirical	Teacher misperceptions of parental involvement may impact teachers' expectations resulting in self-fulfilling prophecy.
	Rubie-Davies, Hattie & Hamilton (2006) Empirical	Effects of teacher expectations may be categorized as self-fulfilling prophecy effects on student achievement.
	Cooper (2003) Empirical	The manner that teachers judge and treat students directly influences their educational and emotional development.
	Delpit, 1995 cited in Cooper, 2003 Empirical	Teachers expect students to follow the implicit rules that govern middle class Whites.
	Tauber (1998) Empirical	Robert K. Merton coined the term self-fulfilling prophecy and developed the 5-step model of the construct.
	Rist (2000) Empirical	Longitudinal study revealed that the teacher's expectations of her students were formed after eight days of school and were based on her personal construct of success as defined by her educated, middle-class value system.
	Mayo (2010) Empirical	Teacher efficacy is also related to attitudes and perceived abilities in working with diverse students.
	Chang (2011)	Positive teacher expectations coupled with false judgment of

	Empirical	student autonomy and ability can lead to poor student achievement ~ “anti-Pygmalion-effect”
	Ogby, 1987 cited Noguera, 2003 Positional	Community-based folk theories suggest that the historical discrimination against Black people may contribute to self-defeating behaviors.
	Ladson-Billings (2009) Positional	Tracking of students, using arbitrary criteria, is still a common practice in schools and occurs upon initial entrance into school.

## **Teacher Practices that Lead to Positive Teacher-Student Relationships**

Cooper (2003) stated, “teachers must commit to being resistors of the status quo. This partly encompasses valuing students’ assets, motivating them to learn, teaching them to be critical thinkers, maintaining high expectations of all students, and using culturally relevant pedagogy” (p.105). Stronge (2007) noted that “researchers contend that constructive social interactions between teachers and students not only contribute to student learning and achievement, but also increase student self-esteem by fostering feelings of belonging to the classroom and the school” (p.26).

A critical element to students’ engagement and motivation in any subject area is their relationship with their teacher. A survey of teachers and students at boys’ schools in six countries: the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Great Britain, South Africa, and Australia, found success in educating boys rested on three themes. One of the themes is that boys are relational learners; establishing an affective relationship is a precondition to successful teaching for boys (Reichert & Hawley, 2009/2010). Students like teachers who are perceived as being encouraging and supportive of student learning by providing confidence-building feedback (Mansfield et al., 2007). Teachers that show respect and fairness toward students engage their students in learning, and set high expectations are successful in maintaining positive teacher-student relationships. Their students view them in a positive manner.



**Culturally Responsive Classroom Behaviors.** A “culturally responsive classroom specifically acknowledges the presence of culturally diverse students and the need for these students to find relevant connections among themselves and with the subject matter and tasks they are asked to perform” (Montgomery, 2001, p.4). In the culturally responsive classroom, teachers recognize diverse learning styles of their students and develop instructional approaches to accommodate these styles. In making “connections with students’ backgrounds, interests, and experiences to teach the standards based curriculum “a win-win learning atmosphere is created in the classroom (p. 1). According to Day-Vines & Day-Hairston (2005), through validation and affirmation of youngsters their respect and cooperation is gained in culturally responsive classrooms.

**Demonstrating Respect and Fairness toward Students.** Students’ perceptions about their teachers impact their achievement and have the power to build or destroy a teacher-student relationship. “Students desire authentic relationships where they are trusted, given responsibility, spoken to honestly and warmly, and treated with dignity” (Marseille, 2009). In sum, students often mirror the respect, or lack of respect, given to them by their teachers (Marseille, 2009). Houston et al (2001) opined that today’s schools need to create an environment where students feel affirmed and validated as persons even as they face challenges to their belief system. Teachers must construct climates in their classrooms where students can express confusion, discomfort, anger, and even fear while knowing that they will be treated with dignity and respect.

Miller (2000) conducted a study to examine the link between teacher-student relationships and early high school failure rates. Using administrative data from the

Chicago Public Schools and survey data, hierarchical linear modeling determined whether teacher-student relationships predict students' likelihood of being on track to graduate, by the end of their high school freshman year (Miller, 2000). This resulted in schools that have students who are more likely to be on track at the end of their freshman year are schools where students trust teachers to be fair and reasonable, to treat them with respect, and to guide them in their learning when they are having trouble (Miller, 2000). This task of showing students respect and fairness requires that teachers and school personnel recognize differences between the school culture and students' own ethnic and cultural identity. Students develop trust and respect for their teachers when their cultural identity is supported in the classroom (Wimberly, 2000).

Milner (2009) posited that there is an important connection between the notion of respect and the relationships that teachers can have with Black male students. Black male students respect their teachers when their teachers respect them. Teachers can successfully exert their authority while, still demonstrating respect for their Black male students (Milner, 2009). "Successful teachers of Black male students do not put their students down; they value Black male students' perspectives and provide them space to have voice in the classroom. They empower the students to speak about what could be in their lives, and the teachers themselves speak about future opportunities and possibilities for the lives of their students" (p. 11).

**Engaging Students in the Classroom.** "Students are engaged in learning when they show commitment to a task because they see inherent value in completing it, despite the challenges" (Babiuk, Cerqueira-Vassallo, Dooner, Force, Mandzuk, Obendoerfer, Roy & Vermette, 2010, p. 34). Marseille (2009) agreed that the development of positive

interpersonal relationships between students and teachers resulted in students being highly involved and interested in the subject matter. Hughes and Kwok (2007) cited research that suggested that the relationships formed by children in the primary grades established patterns of school engagement and motivation that may have long-term consequences for their academic motivation and achievement. Additionally, students who experienced close and supportive relationships with their teacher are more engaged in that they work harder in the classroom, face difficulties with more perseverance, accept teacher direction and criticism, have better coping strategies for managing stress, and attend better to instruction (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). Miller (2000) reviewed empirical evidence that demonstrated that student engagement on the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive levels is concomitantly linked with students' achievement in elementary, middle, and high school grades.

Miller (2000) cited that the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) called for "smaller units within schools 'in which anonymity is banished,' and where schools are oriented to creating caring and coaching teacher-student relationships" ( p. 18). The research done by Miller (2000) found that strong teacher-student relationships are important, not in increasing academic achievement broadly, or preventing students from skipping classes, but in keeping students engaged enough in the schooling process to progress through the system.

Engaging students by showing a regard for student perspectives and providing them with choices for becoming actively involved in their classroom learning is a demonstration of balance between pedagogical and social authority in the classroom (Babiuk, et. al, 2010). "Relationships are enhanced when children are truly learning, and

learning is enhanced when children are in a caring environment” (Midgley & Edelin, 1998, p. 200). Providing students’ opportunities to have direct input on their learning, exploring students’ individual interests, and considering task design are effective ways to integrate curriculum and to actively involve students in all aspects of their learning (Babiuk, et al., 2010). The social-emotional well-being of students must be a concern for teachers even if their attempts to show concern and offer comfort are ignored or rejected; they must continue to care. There are many strategies that can be used by teachers to meet students’ diverse needs and to foster engagement in learning, however real and meaningful learning is enmeshed in strong interpersonal relations with students.

**Setting High Expectations for Students.** A teacher’s expectations for their students, whether knowingly or unknowingly, are demonstrated through the interactions with the student during instruction (Stronge, 2002). Research into teacher expectations has shown clear evidence that expectations do exist in classrooms and that they can positively or negatively influence student performance and achievement (Rubie-Davies et al., 2006).

Teacher’s expectations influence the performance of their students (Rosenthal, 2002; Weinstein, 2002). Bandura, a noted researcher on teacher self-efficacy stated, “schools heavily populated with minority students of low socioeconomic status achieve at the highest percentile ranks based on national norms of language and mathematical competencies if taught by teachers who believe that by their collective efforts that students are motivated and teachable whatever their background” (cited in Love, 2002, p. 12). The collective belief by teachers that all students can succeed may make a significant difference in their achievement levels when the majority of students are low-

income and students of color (Love, 2002). “Teachers who have high standards and expectations and are committed to supporting students’ efforts and interests are most memorable to gifted students” (Stronge, 2007, p. 35).

Love (2002) observed teachers in an academically successful school and in classrooms serving primarily African-American students forming parental-like relationships with their students. She described an observed quality of the adults in this environment; they expect students to live up to their responsibilities, much like parents expect family members to contribute to the family responsibilities (Love, 2002). Milner’s research (2009) described the importance of teachers seeing beyond their current situations and to empower African-American male students to envision a life beyond their present situation and to pursue new heights in their lives (socially, economically, emotionally, educationally, and politically). “If a student has never known or seen anything but mediocrity, it is probably going to be difficult for that student to envision a different path; he or she will probably strive for mediocrity. However, when students realize...that it is possible for them to turn their lives around, they are more likely to work harder” (Milner, 2009, p. 9). These types of changes emerge from teachers and schools that refused to give up on their students. The teachers refused to “grant the students permission to fail;” the teachers were invested in the students, and realized the risks and consequences in store for their Black students if they did not teach them and the students did not learn as suggested by Ladson-Billings (2002, p.111).

Students who form cohesive bonds with school personnel value the educational process more than their counterparts (Wimberly, 2002). Wimberly indicated that there is a positive relationship between teachers’ expectations and student achievement (2002).

“Teachers’ expectations can influence the type of information they convey, the opportunities they create for their students, and the values they help perpetuate” (Wimberly, 2000, p. 15). “If teachers believe Black males are destined for failure and apathy, their pedagogies will be saturated with low expectations; teachers will be unwilling to prepare for their courses and unwilling to provide Black male students...with the best. [Thus] caring teachers cannot adopt approaches that do not push their students – high expectations are necessary to help the students emancipate themselves and to move beyond their current situations” (Milner, 2009, p. 13).

**Establishing and Maintaining Positive Communication.** The instructional communication held between coaches and athletes parallels teacher-student instructional communication patterns in many ways (Marseille, 2009). Both coaches and teachers want achievement and success. Coaches use the infusion of motivational idioms into their communication with athletes to build their self-esteem and confidence and establishing trust; however, this closeness is often missing in the teacher-student relationship (Marseille, 2009). “In schools, this would translate into a role where teachers use strategies for affirmation as key to the process of transmitting information” (Marseille, 2009, p.64), thus creating a teacher-student bond. Incorporating this type of discourse into daily instruction would provide students with the confidence they need to achieve in the classroom (Marseille, 2009).

Teachers, who cultivate an environment that is nurturing, supportive, and filled with praise in fact, create a learning environment that motivates students to achieve (Marseille, 2009). Verbal encouragements such as “yes,” “that’s correct,” “good job,” and “almost there keep going” positively influence the teacher-student relationship

(Marseille, 2009). Inversely, verbal criticisms such as “why didn’t you do your homework,” “no, that is the wrong answer,” and “you should know this” can also have a significant influence and strain the teacher-student relationship (Marseille, 2009). “The relationship between student and teacher provides a foundation on which deeply satisfying learning can be built” (p. 55). Educational expectations and postsecondary participation were higher among students who talked with their teachers and had positive feelings toward them. These interactions and positive feelings contributed to more cohesive school relationships (Wimberly, 2002).

Black male students often hear deficit terms used to describe them. The media classifies them as “at risk. They understand that they are not supposed to be successful” (Milner, 2009, p.11). Milner stated, “language, our discourse, the ways in which we communicate, can have profound influence on the lives of others. Black male students often hear the negative position about their lives and situations. Talk, in this sense, is expensive because the kinds of information teachers (and others) share with students have the potential to propel or stifle Black students” (p. 11). Successful teachers of Black male students used instructional examples that placed Black male students in corporate positions, challenging them to envision the possibility of working beyond the expected mindless menial job their current situation may suggest (Milner, 2009).

Teachers speak possibility in the lives of students when they declare that students can successfully problem solve and discover correct answers through affirming positive statements. This is critical to next level education for Black male students. However, “next level education cannot be achieved if teachers do not care about their students and if the students do not care about themselves and their teachers” (Milner, 2009, p. 12).

Stronge (2007) stated that students of teachers who encourage them to succeed tend to put forth more academic effort compared to their counterparts whose teachers are not encouraging (as cited by Ferguson, 2002). Teacher warmth and support has unparalleled power to help children adjust and achieve in school settings (Black, 2006). A 2005 study of 910 first-grade students, were identified by their kindergarten teachers as having significant behavioral, social, and academic problems in the classroom, thus negatively affecting their ability to achieve and be successful (Black, 2006). By the end of first grade, the children whose teachers infused “everyday interactions with emotional and academic support disproved their kindergarten teachers initial label of behavioral, social, and academic problem” (Black, 2006, p. 19).

Hamre and Pianta determined classroom support could help close racial and economic achievement gaps but “the odds are stacked against disadvantaged kids [because they are] more likely to land in poor quality classrooms with little support” (year p.19). Black (2006) discussed that in studying some 2,000 high school students, through surveys and follow-up group interviews, the findings continuously yielded that most low-achieving teens said they felt no connection to their school or teachers, and that they had given up on schoolwork and homework because they felt that no one cared about their performance.



**Table 2. Summary of positive factors that impact teacher-student relationships.**

Positive Impact	Author, Copyright, Type of Study	Summary
Demonstrating Respect & Fairness toward Students	Marseille (2009) Empirical	Students often mirror the respect, or lack of respect, given to them by their teachers.
	Miller (2000) Empirical	Hierarchical linear modeling shows how teacher-student relationships predict students' likelihood of being on track to graduate, by the end of their high school freshman year.
	Wimberly (2000) Empirical	Students develop trust and respect for their teachers when their cultural identity is supported in the classroom.
	Houston, King & Middleton (2001) Positional	Schools and educators must create environments where students can feel affirmed and validated, and also are safely able to express negative emotions while knowing that they will be treated with dignity and respect.
	Milner (2009) Positional	There is an important relationship between respect and successful teacher-student relationships with Black male students.
Engaging Students in the Classroom	Babiuk, Cerqueira-Vassallo, Dooner, Force, Mandzuk, Obendoerfer, Roy & Vermette (2010) Empirical	Teachers interact differently to low-achieving students compared to high-achieving students.
	Marseille (2009) Empirical	The development of positive interpersonal relationships between students and teachers resulted in students being highly involved and interested in the subject matter.
	Hughes & Kwok (2007)	Relationships formed by children in primary grades establish

	Empirical	patterns of school engagement and motivation that may have long-term impact on their academic motivation and achievement.
	Miller (2000) Empirical	The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) calls for smaller units within schools, and for schools to create positive teacher-student relationships. Strong teacher-student relationships result in keeping students engaged in the schooling process.
	Midgley & Edelin (1998) Positional	Relationships are enhanced when children are truly learning, and learning is enhanced when children are in a caring environment
Setting Positive Expectations	Stronge (2002); Stronge (2007) Empirical	Teachers' expectations for their students are demonstrated through their instructional interactions with their students.
	Rubie-Davies, Hattie & Hamilton (2006) Empirical	Expectations do exist in classrooms, and they can have positive or negative influence on students' performance and achievement.
	Rosenthal (2002); Weinstein (2002) Empirical	Teacher expectations influence the performance of their students.
	Love (2002) Empirical	Teachers who believe that by their collective efforts that students can be motivated and are teachable, regardless of their background yield minority students with low socioeconomic status achieving at the highest percentile ranks.
	Wimberly (2002) Empirical	There is a positive relationship between teachers' expectations and student achievement.

	Ladson-Billings (2002) Positional	Teachers can choose to not grant their students permission to fail.
	Milner (2009) Positional	Teachers must empower their African-American male students to envision and pursue a life beyond their current circumstances.
Establishing & Maintaining Positive Communication	Wimberly (2002); Stronge (2007) Empirical	Educational expectations and postsecondary participation were higher among students who talked with their teachers and had positive feelings toward them contributing to more cohesive school relationships.
	Marseille (2009) Empirical	Instructional communication held between coaches and athletes parallels teacher-student instructional communication patterns.
	Black (2006) Empirical	Teacher warmth and support has power to help children adjust and achieve in school settings.
	Milner (2009) Positional	Black male students often hear deficit terms used to describe them. Discourse used to communicate can have profound influence on the lives of others. Successful teachers speak possibility into the lives of their students, critical to next level education for Black male students.

## **Summary**

There are a myriad of factors that impact teacher-student relationships with African-American male students. Teachers' expectations may impact students' academic achievement and self-esteem, altering self-fulfilling prophecies into positive or negative outcomes. Educators are responsible for balancing their personal biases, stereotypes, and self-efficacy when delivering instruction to their students. Historically, minority students have not had the same positive teacher-student relationships that their Caucasian counterparts have experienced; however, through fairness, student engagement, respect, and positive communication many teachers are successfully forging positive relationships with African-American male students. This chapter is organized by positive and negative strategies towards building teacher-student relationships. Multiple studies may address minority or African-American students. However, there are a small number of research studies that focus specifically on African-American male students. Due to the limited amount of research studies on African-American male students, they are integrated throughout the literature review, instead of consolidated in a specific paragraph. The lack of empirical and positional evidence on building teacher-student relationships with African-American elementary male students in the field of education, led to the rationale for this research study.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The focus of this study was to explore the practices that promote teacher-student relationships for African-American male elementary students. This qualitative study used an interpretivist paradigm and a case study approach for gathering data. Qualitative researchers rely on multiple methods for gathering data. The use of multiple data-collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness and triangulation of the data (Glesne, 2006). The dual data-gathering techniques used in this qualitative inquiry include open-ended participant interviews and participant observations in a classroom setting.

#### **Paradigm**

A paradigm offers a way to think about the data and link them to process. “The paradigm is a set of questions that can be applied to data to help the analyst draw out the contextual factors and identify relationships between context and process” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.89). An interpretivist paradigm was used to investigate the lived experiences of elementary teachers relative to their relationships with African-American male elementary students in this study.

This paradigm “holds status quo assumptions about the social world and subjectivist assumptions about epistemology. Interpretive research typically tries to understand the social world as it is (the status quo) from the perspective of individual experience” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.46). It is grounded in the use of thick description, defined as “description that goes beyond the mere or bare reporting of an act, but describes and probes the intentions, motives, meanings, contexts, situations and circumstances of action” (Glesne, 2006, p. 27). The rich, thick description provided by the data is then analyzed to provide understanding of “direct lived experience instead of abstract generalizations” (p. 27). The interpretations drawn from the collected data uncovered and illustrated those teacher practices that yield teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students. Data gathered from qualitative research, often consists of numerous concepts embodied in complex relationships that may be difficult to extrapolate (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

According to Glesne (2006), the interpretivist paradigm is based on interpretation, the act of making sense out of social interactions. The ontology of interpretivism holds that the concept of teacher-student relationships is “a socially constructed phenomena that may mean different things to different people” (Mertens, 2005, p. 14). Interpretivist researchers “reject the notion that there is an objective reality that can be known and taking the stance that the researcher’s goal is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge” (p. 14). This basic belief on the nature of reality best suits this study because the findings in this qualitative study are the result of the interpretation given to the phenomenon of teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students by the actual elementary classroom teachers, who

have this lived experience. This genre of qualitative research is seeking to answer the question, “What do the stories people construct about their lives mean?” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 94).

The epistemology or the link between researcher and participants, “opts for a more personal, interactive mode of data collection” (Mertens, 2005, p. 14). In this study, the interpretations of the gathered data are “rooted in contexts and persons apart from the researcher and are not figments of the imagination. Data can be tracked to their sources, and the logic used to assemble interpretations can be made explicit in the narrative” (p. 14). Interpretive “research methods are typically humanistic [such as] face-to-face interactions, whether in the form of in-depth interviews or extended observations or some combination” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 46). Data were gathered using open-ended interviews that focused on understanding specific classroom practices that promote teacher-student relationships between elementary classroom teachers and their African-American male students. The open-ended interviews with the elementary teachers confirmed the data gathered earlier in the classroom observations of participants instructing the African-American male students.

### **Strategy**

Through the use of a case study approach, practices that promote teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students were investigated in this qualitative inquiry. Rossman & Rallis (2003) described case studies as “uniquely intend[ing] to capture the complexity of a particular event, program, individual, or place” (p. 278). Case studies seek to understand a larger phenomenon through intensive study of one specific instance or occurrence of the phenomenon. [They are] “descriptive,

heuristic, inductive, and use multiple flexible technique” (p. 94). A phenomenon is defined by Gall, Gall & Borg (2007) as a “process, event, person, or other item of interest to the researcher” (p. 447). Rossman & Rallis (2003) identify this genre of qualitative research as being focused on what the participants are doing, their purpose for their actions, the outcomes, and the impact of the patterns of action on situations and participants.

Stake (2000) states that case studies are not defined by a specific methodology but by the object of the study. To study a case, data collection of the following types of information: nature of the case; the historical background and physical setting; economic, political, legal, and aesthetic contexts; other cases through which this case is recognized; and those informants through whom the case can be known (2000).

Yin (2003) recommends starting a case study by developing a research design. He identifies the following steps in the development of the case study design: developing the research question, identify the propositions for the study, specify the unit of analysis, establish the logic linking the data to the propositions, and the criteria for interpretation of the findings should be explained. “How” and “why” questions are suggested as appropriate research questions by Yin. The propositions that are identified, if any, are statements similar to hypotheses that state the researcher’s rationale for wanting to observe a specific behavior or relationship, although all case studies may not lend themselves to proposition statements, especially if they are exploratory (Mertens, 2005). However, Yin (2003) says the researcher should be able to state the purpose of the study and the criteria by which an explanation will be judged successful. Propositions help narrow the focus of the study.



Specification of the case means clearly identifying the unit of analysis. In this research study, the unit of analysis will be African-American male elementary teachers. Mertens (2005) suggests basing the research design on either a single case or multiple cases and establishing the boundaries as clearly as possible in terms of who is included, the geographic area, and time for beginning and ending the case. A single unit of analysis may be selected or a holistic unit may be used when examining more complex phenomenon. Yin (2003) labels single-unit case studies that examine the global nature of an organization or program as holistic designs and multiple-unit studies as embedded designs. Yin suggests that researchers attempt to describe how the logic linking the data to the propositions (2003). No statistical tests are typically appropriate for use as a criterion for case study decisions (Mertens, 2005). It is suggested that researchers use judgment to identify different patterns to compare contrasting propositions because statistical tests are typically used as criterion for case study decisions (Yin, 2003). Case studies fully depict an individual's experience in program input, process and results (Mertens, 2005). These are usually time-consuming to collect, organize and describe. This research strategy typically represents depth of information, rather than breadth (2005). In this case study, the dispositions and practices of developing teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students were analyzed through in-depth interviews and participant observations.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the key dispositions exhibited by teachers who form successful teacher student relationships in the elementary classroom setting?

2. What are the key dispositions exhibited by teachers form positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students?
3. What are teacher practices in working with all students in their classes, including African American male students, for teachers who demonstrate positive teacher-student relationships?

### **Participants**

The participants targeted for this study are elementary teachers of African-American male students from a southeastern Virginia school division. As currently employed classroom teachers, these participants were able to provide their perceptions, through open-ended interviews, about classroom practices that they implement to promote teacher-student relationships with their African-American male elementary students. Only six elementary teachers that are currently teaching African-American male students, in grades kindergarten through third grade, participated in this study.

Student-Teacher Rating Scales (STRS) were distributed to elementary teachers who taught kindergarten through third grade at four elementary schools in the same southeastern Virginia school division. Only forty of the teachers completed and returned the STRS to the researcher. The teachers that completed the STRS came from four elementary schools in the same southeastern Virginia school division, with 33% of the teachers from School A, 21% of the teachers from School B, 34% of the teachers from School C, and 12% of the teachers from School D. The majority of the teachers, about 90%, taught kindergarten through second grade. While only about 10% of the participants taught third grade.

Instructions accompanying the rating scale asked teachers to use their perceptions of their teacher-student relationship with an African-American male student in their classroom to rate the statements. These teachers were also asked to provide the number of African-American male students that are currently in their classroom. Forty-eight percent of the teachers that completed the STRS instructed less than two African-American male students in their classrooms, thus, disqualifying them as research study participants.

The teachers' level of conflict and closeness with students was determined based on the ratings that teachers assigned the 15 statements on the STRS. Teachers that had high closeness ratings, such as 4 and 5, and low conflict ratings, such as 1 and 2, were considered to be potential participants. At this phase of creating a sample, the pool of participants went from 40 to 18 potential participants, due to the small number of teachers that taught two or fewer African-American male students. Next, the 18 potential participants were ranked 1 to 18 based on their closeness and conflict ratings. There were numerous combinations of rating scores. Some of the teachers had high conflict ratings and low closeness ratings. Of the remaining 18 potential participants, only 8 of them had ratings that showed both high levels of closeness and low levels of conflict on the STRS. The top six teachers were asked to participate in the research study. Two of those teachers declined, leaving six teachers that met the criteria of high closeness ratings, low conflict ratings, and currently instructing at least two African-American male students to be selected to participate in this research study. This group of six teachers was selected for the study.

## **Plans for Data Collection**

An open-ended standardized interview protocol (Appendix A), and anecdotal field notes (Appendix B) gathered from participant observations in the classroom setting were used to gather data on how elementary teachers forge teacher-student relationships with their African-American elementary male students. A standardized interview protocol was used to conduct standardized interviews with elementary teachers regarding their relationships with their African-American male students, yielding a rich, thick description of their perceptions. The researcher conducted participant observations in the classroom, during an instructional time, when the participating teacher was interacting with her African-American male elementary students.

**STRS Instrumentation.** The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale - Short Form (STRS) was used to determine the purposeful sample for this research study (Appendix C). The STRS is a 15-item self-report instrument that uses a 5-point, Likert-type rating scale to assess a teacher's perception of his or her relationship with a student, a student's interactive behavior with the teacher, and a teacher's beliefs about the student's feelings toward the teacher. This tool was developed to measure a teacher's perception of his or her relationship patterns with a particular student in terms of conflict, closeness, and dependency from preschool through third grade (Pianta, 2001). The Likert-type scale is numerically one to five, with five suggesting a significant level of the relationship pattern conflict, closeness, or dependency.

The STRS was distributed to a purposeful sample of 40 elementary teachers that are currently employed in a southeastern Virginia school district for completion to determine teacher sample for this research study. The teachers were asked to complete

the STRS for African-American male elementary students in their current classroom. Using a 5-point Likert-type rating scale, the participant assigned value to each statement on the STRS instrument. The researcher calculated the values assigned by the participants to generate subscale scores and a total score to assess the student-teacher relationship between the teacher and a particular student. High scores in the Closeness subscale and low scores in the Conflict subscale indicate a positive teacher-student relationship according to Pianta's research on the phenomenon of teacher-student relationships (Pianta, 2001). Only the teachers whose STRS scale scores evidence a high closeness and low conflict with their African-American male elementary students were considered for participation in this research study. Only six female elementary teachers actually participated in this research study.

The researcher numerically coded the completed STRS forms so that a purposeful sample of six participants was selected for this case study of teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students. The purposeful sample of participants in this research was comprised of elementary teachers who currently have at least two African-American males in their classrooms and demonstrated a high level of closeness and low level of conflict, combined on their STRS form.

The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale – Short Form (STRS) was developed by Pianta (2001) to be a self-reporting tool that measures a teacher's perception of his or her relationship with a particular student from preschool through third grade. This 15-item self-report tool, completed by teachers, used a 5-point Likert-type rating scale. Teachers rated each particular item on the STRS as it applied to her relationship with a particular student. The STRS was scored by summing groups of items corresponding to three

factor-based subscales that capture three dimensions of student-teacher relationships: conflict, closeness, and dependency. By using raw scores from these three subscales, a total scale score was calculated that will assess the overall quality of the relationship. The STRS is appropriate for students in preschool through third grade (Pianta, 2001).

This instrument examined student-teacher relationship patterns in terms of conflict, closeness, and dependency, and the overall quality of the relationship. Each of these components of teacher-student relationships are subscales on the STRS instrument. The Conflict subscale measures the degree to which a teacher perceives his or her relationship with a particular student as negative and conflict-laden. High Conflict scores indicate that the teacher struggles with the student, may perceive the student as angry and unpredictable, consequently leaving the teacher feeling emotionally drained and ineffective. The Closeness subscale measures the degree to which a teacher experiences affection, warmth, and open communication with a particular student. High Closeness scores indicate that the relationship is characterized by warmth; and the teacher believes that they are effective because the student uses the teachers as a source of support. The Dependency subscale measures the degree to which a teacher perceives a particular student as overly dependent on him or her. High Dependency scores suggest that the student reacts strongly to separation from the teacher, requests help when it is not really needed, and raises concerns to the teacher about the student's overreliance. High levels of closeness and low levels of conflict indicate a positive teacher-student relationship (Pianta, 2001).

Development of the STRS began in 1991; and evolved into the present day Likert-type self-reporting three-factor model based on a conceptual model of student-

teacher relationships (Pianta, 1999) in which conflict and closeness are two primary dimensions along which teachers' relationship experiences vary. The third dimension, dependency, reflects the extent to which teachers vary in their experiences of negotiating and supporting autonomy in their relationships with individual students. The normative base for the STRS is 275 teachers, all of whom were women teaching in classes from preschool through third grade. 70% of the teachers in the normative sample were Caucasian, 15% were African American, 10% were Hispanic American, and 5% represented other ethnic backgrounds. The student sample consisted of 1,535 children between the ages of four years, one month and eight years, eight months. The students' mean age was five years. Gender information was reported for 97% of the students, of which 53% of the students were boys and 47% were girls. The students were enrolled in preschool through third grade students from a variety of ethnic, socioeconomic, and parental education backgrounds making this instrument psychometrically reliable and valid.

When the STRS scale and subscale scores for boys and girls were compared (using Bonferroni correction for multiple testing), teachers reported higher Conflict scores for boys compared to girls. Teachers also reported higher Conflict scores with African-American students, lower Closeness scores with African-American students, and lower Total scores with African-American students indicating less positive relationships with African-American students. This supports the necessity of a research study that investigates dispositions and practices that promote teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students.

**Teacher Effectiveness Observation Protocol.** Stronge's (2003) Teacher Effectiveness Scale (TES) is a behaviorally-anchored rating scale that focuses on effective teaching behavior in the classroom and the degree to which the participating classroom teachers exhibit those behaviors (Appendix D). Content validation of the rating scale was attained through a comparison of teacher effectiveness research reflected in Stronge's (2002, 2007) meta-review of qualities of effective teachers. Concurrent validity was developed for the TES by comparing actual teaching practices with the instrument's intended content design in a field test (Stronge, 2003). The Teacher Effectiveness Scale measures teacher effectiveness in four major dimensions: instruction, assessment skills, classroom management, and personal qualities (Stronge, 2003). Prior to the field test of the Teacher Effectiveness Scale observers were trained in its use and given three practice opportunities. The performance of the participants during training determined if they would be selected to conduct classroom observations use the TES instrument. Following the selection of observers and training, the TES was field tested with a purposeful stratified sample of 53 fifth-grade teachers from four school districts in a southeastern state.

The participant observations used in this research study captured data about the participant and her interactions with her elementary African-American male students, related to building teacher-student relationships. The study participants and the interactions with their African-American male elementary students were observed in a classroom setting during an instructional block of time and recorded on the TES (Appendix E). There were two participant observations; each lasted for no more than 45 minutes, for the convenience of the participant and the researcher and to minimize



disruption to the learning environment of the students. The observations were audio-taped by the researcher to capture teacher-student verbal exchanges and direct quotes. During the observation, the researcher looked for evidence of practices discussed in the literature review such as fairness and respect practices, high teacher expectations, engaging students in the classroom, and the use of positive communication. Additionally, the researcher noted physical environmental elements such as posters and bulletin board displays and teacher-student interactions.

“Observation takes you inside the setting; it helps you discover complexity in social settings by being there...The challenge is to identify the ‘big picture’ while noting huge amounts of detail in multiple and complex actions” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 194). The researcher observed both interpersonal behaviors and instructional practices that promote teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students. Therefore, this data collected included behaviors such as body language, student questioning techniques, proximity, voice intonation and inflection, and word choice.

In addition, to using the TES instrument to capture observational data about teacher dispositions and practices in forming teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students, the researcher will take field notes consisting of a running record, during the participant observations. The running record was comprised of the researcher capturing as much detail as possible about the physical environment of the classroom and the study participants. Raw field notes were taken by hand in the classroom setting by the researcher. The handwritten field notes were transcribed and

coded into usable data as soon after the actual participant observation as possible to maintain accuracy and descriptive data collection.

**Interview Protocol.** An open-ended standardized interview protocol was used to elicit elementary teachers' (grades kindergarten through third) perceptions of the practices that are used to foster teacher-student relationships with their African-American male elementary students. The interview protocol began with a set of standardized questions, developed from the literature review. Follow-up questions were asked of participants by the researcher to further clarify points of interest from the interview responses and the participant observations. A specialist with a qualitative research background reviewed this interview protocol prior to it being implemented.

This open-ended interview protocol was used to interview each participant. It was the goal of this researcher to not lead the participants' in their responses but to gather as much information as possible through the use of follow-up questions. The interviews were audio-taped to help ensure accuracy during transcription by the researcher. The interview questions were designed to be open-ended to encourage longer and more detailed responses about specific practices used to forge positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students.

One open-ended interview was conducted face-to-face with each participant utilizing the open-ended interview protocol (Appendix F). Each participant was privately interviewed and tape recorded by the researcher. A face-to-face interview was advantageous because it allowed high quality data that includes para-language, such as facial expressions, hand movements, and body language, to be captured by the researcher. This meaningful data added to the rich, thick description of the case study. The open-

ended questions encouraged the participants' to expound upon their responses. The open-ended interview, post the two participant observations, was conducted to add further explanation to the observed lived experience of teachers forming relationships with their African-American male elementary students. Each participant was informed that they would receive a summary of the transcribed interview as a means of member checking (Appendix G) and ensuring that the researcher accurately conveyed the perceptions of the participant.

The researcher actively listened and asked clarifying statements during the interview, enabling each participant to express their unique experiences and perceptions about dispositions and practices that form teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students. Clarifying inquiry statements such as: "I hear you saying..." or "Did I understand you correctly to say..." were used as a method of obtaining content validity and verifying the intended meaning of participant responses via member checking. The researcher transcribed the recorded interview, coded the participant responses, utilized apriori codes to develop themes, and determined conclusions from this coding.

### **Plans for Data Analysis**

Data were collected on the observational study of teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students through participant observations and an open-ended in-depth face-to-face interview. An interpretational analysis method was used to analyze the data collected in this study. This method included holistic coding, categorization, comparison of coded data, and the identification of themes (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). Each individual participant interview was transcribed by the researcher.

The transcript of the interview was openly coded using a constant comparative analysis of the units of data (Appendix H). The anecdotal field notes from the participant observations were holistically coded by the researcher in this research study.

“A code is a word or short phrase that captures and signals what is going on in a piece of data in a way that links it to some more general analysis issue” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 286). During the coding process, a unit of analysis was selected, that consisted of a short phrase or a complete sentence. The first unit of data was read and a code was assigned. Then the second unit of data was read and it was decided by the researcher how similar the second unit of data is to the first unit of data. If the two units of data are similar, the same code was used; if they are different then a different code was assigned to the second unit of data. This process continued for the analysis of all units of data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The open codes generated from the interview transcripts, coupled with the apriori codes were used to identify similar and dissenting themes in the data.

A priori codes established prior to the interview process reflect concepts evidenced in the conceptual framework and literature review for this research study such as positive communication, positive teacher expectations, fairness and respect, and student engagement (Table 4). Data gathered during participant observations included body language, intonation, questioning methods, and physical contact, were also coded. The apriori codes were used to organize the data obtained through in-depth interviews and participant observations, in terms of commonalities and differences. The themes developed using the interpretational analysis provided the researcher with insight about

the phenomenon of teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students.

The objective of the researcher was to refrain from interjecting her own experiences and biases and allow the participants to express and frame their own perceptions of behaviors that create positive teacher-student relationships with their African-American male students. However, the researcher acknowledged and disclosed her individual biases and unique experiences related to teacher-student relationships with elementary African-American male students within a researcher as instrument statement (Appendix I).

**Table 3. Data Sources and Analysis Method of Research Questions**

Research Questions	Data Sources	Data Analysis
1. What are the key dispositions exhibited by teachers who form successful teacher-student relationships in the elementary classroom setting?	Open-Ended Standardized Interviews Classroom Observations	Interpretational analysis: coding, constant comparison code analysis, meaning categorization and theme identification.  Holistic discourse analysis of classroom observation field notes
2. What are the key dispositions exhibited by teachers who form positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students?	Open-Ended Standardized Interviews Classroom Observations	Interpretational analysis: coding, constant comparison code analysis, meaning categorization and theme identification.  Holistic discourse analysis of classroom observation field notes
3. What are teacher practices in working with all students in their classes, including African American male students, for teachers who demonstrate positive teacher-student relationships?	Open-Ended Standardized Interviews Classroom Observations	Interpretational analysis: coding, constant comparison code analysis, meaning categorization and theme identification.  Holistic discourse analysis of classroom observation field notes

**Table 4. Apriori Codes and Definitions**

Apriori Code	Definition
Closeness	The teacher experiences affection, warmth, and open communication with a particular student (Pianta, 2001).
Conflict	The teacher tends to struggle with the student, perceives the student as angry or unpredictable, and consequently feels emotionally drained and ineffective in dealing with the student (Pianta, 2001).
Positive Communication	Teachers using discourse to communicate positive influence and possibility into the lives of their students through affirming positive statements. Teachers offer verbal encouragements and praise to their students; citing instructional examples that place African-American male students in non-medial vocations (Marseille, 2009; Milner, 2009).
Respect and Fairness	Educators create environments where students can feel affirmed and validated; and also are safely able to express negative emotions while knowing that they will be treated with dignity and respect (Houston, King & Middleton, 2001).
Student Engagement	"Students are engaged in learning when they show commitment to a task because they see inherent value in completing it, despite the

	challenges” (Babiuk, Cerqueira-Vassallo, Dooner, Force, Mandzuk, Obendoerfer, Roy & Vermette, 2010, p. 34). Students being highly involved and interested in the subject matter (Marseille, 2009).
Positive Teacher Expectations	Teachers who believe that by their collective efforts that students can be motivated and are teachable (Love, 2002). Teachers can choose to not grant their students permission to fail (Ladson-Billings, 2002).



## **Ethical Considerations**

Permission to conduct the interview protocol was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the College of William and Mary and from the participating school division (Appendix J). An email was sent to potential study participants briefly explaining the study and asking for their availability to be interviewed. Upon receipt of the IRB's ethical consent, data collection dates for interviews and participant observations were selected by this researcher and each participant. Each participant was informed that her answers to any of the researcher's questions would be maintained in confidentiality and protected throughout the study. Any material that was submitted to the researcher for the purpose of the study was kept confidential. Pseudonyms, selected by the researcher, were used in lieu of the participants' real names to sustain confidential reporting of their thoughts and perceptions. All records and tapes of interviews and classroom observations were stored in a confidential and secure location during the research study and destroyed at the conclusion of the research study.

## **Trustworthiness and Authenticity**

The dimensions of trustworthiness and authenticity are used to ensure the ethical soundness of research. They serve as a means of establishing the credibility of a study and its usefulness in improving social circumstances (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Trustworthiness is defined as "research validity" (Glesne, 2006, p. 37). Rossman and Rallis (2003) indicated that a trustworthy study "conforms to standards for acceptable and

competent practice” and “meets standards for ethical conduct and sensitivity to the politics of the topic and setting” (p. 63). Trustworthiness is measured in four dimensions that include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Authenticity refers to “the presentation of a balanced view of all perspectives, values, and beliefs (Mertens, 2005, p.257).

**Trustworthiness.** A study is considered credible and authentic when the voices of the participants are communicated truthfully and accurately. Member checking, a tool used to create authenticity, was used to ensure that data was truthful and accurate in this study. This technique was implemented by this researcher during the individual interviews by synthesizing the participants’ responses and verbally verifying them with the participant through question probes such as “I think I understand you to say,” guarantees that the perceptions were captured and conveyed truthfully. Participants were asked to review interview summaries for verification of content, another measure in establishing trustworthiness. Obtaining the reactions of research participants to interview summaries informed the researcher of any sections, if published, that could be problematic for the participant either personally or professionally (Glesne, 2006).

The use of dual data collection methods, interviewing and observation, triangulated the data in this study by adding a layer of richness and making the findings more believable and validating the interpretations given by the researcher. The clarification of researcher bias allows the researcher to reflect on her own subjectivity and how it was used and monitored during the research study (Glesne, 2006). Therefore, the researcher completed a Researcher as Instrument statement disclosing individual bias

so that readers are informed of the lens used by the researcher to report the findings of this study. These measures of trustworthiness add validity to this case study.

**Authenticity.** In a case study, trustworthiness and authenticity is needed to validate the findings for the reader of the research study. It is important that the researcher describe the study participants, maintaining their anonymity, and how information about their constructions will be obtained. This measure of fairness in authenticity is needed to explain how constructions and their underlying value structures will be gathered and honored in the process. Conflicts and value differences described by research participant were reported by the researcher. The study can be deemed fair if assenting and dissenting viewpoints or interpretations are included in the research (Mertens, 2005). Through thick description, the researcher provided enough description to allow the reader to understand the interpretation and to see how it was constructed, how descriptions were clarified, and how details are illuminated (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **Background**

This mixed methods study endeavored to determine the methods and practices that elementary teachers created teacher-student relationships with African-American elementary male students through their dispositions and practices. Each of the participants was a contracted teacher for the same school division in Southeastern Virginia (Table 5). Four of the participants taught at the same school; and the other two participants each taught at a different school in the division. The student population at School A consisted of larger pockets of African-American students, 23%, while School B and School C's African-American student population was 16% and 12% respectively.

The researcher observed six elementary teachers on two occasions in their individual classroom settings during the second semester of the school year. The average class size was about eighteen to twenty-three students. There were about two or three African American males in the observed classrooms in Schools B and C; however there were about four African American males in the observed classroom in School A. The teachers had a variety of teaching experiences, ranging from three years to 38 years, and each teacher had experience delivering instruction to an African-American male elementary student. By conducting two classroom observations, followed by a one-on-

one interview with each teacher, the researcher was able to gather data on practices that elementary teachers use to forge positive teacher-student relationships with African-American elementary male students.

**Table 5. Participant Demographic Information**

Participant	Participant Ethnicity	Grade taught	Number of years teaching	Number of African-American male students in class
Mrs. Red	African-American	Kindergarten	35	2
Mrs. Orange	Caucasian	Kindergarten	11	4
Mrs. Yellow	Caucasian	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	4	3
Mrs. Green	Caucasian	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	20	3
Mrs. Blue	Caucasian	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	8	3
Mrs. Purple	African-American	Kindergarten	15	2

**Inter-rater Reliability.** The inter-rater reliability for this researcher's use of the Teacher Effectiveness Scale was measured by comparing her observational ratings to that of another school administrator who had extensive experience teaching and working with students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. Three sets of observation anecdotal field notes from three of the research study participants were used to complete the Teacher Effectiveness Scale by both the researcher and the validating administrator. The ratings for Observation One were identical in the Instructional Skills, Assessment Skills, and Personal Qualities. There was some variance in the subcategory of Classroom Management between the researcher and the validating administrator. In one comparison, this researcher determined that the participant should receive a level three

rating while the validating administrator recommended that the participant should receive a level four rating. The ratings for Observation Two were identical in all four of the TES quadrants. The ratings for Observation Three were identical in the Assessment Skills, Classroom Learning Environment, and Personal Qualities. There was some variance in the subcategory of Instructional Clarity. This researcher determined that the participant should receive a rating of four and the validating administrator rated the participant at a level three. Although there were the few differences noted above, the results of this inter-rater reliability assessment suggested that the researcher was rating in a manner that was reasonable and could be replicated by other similar individuals.

### **Teacher Effectiveness Scale**

Stronge's (2010) Teacher Effectiveness Scale was used to standardize the twelve observations that were conducted by the researcher (See Appendices D & E). The four main categories or quadrants identified by this observation tool were Instructional Skills, Classroom Learning Environment, Assessment Skills, and Personal Qualities. Each category is divided into four levels of effectiveness for the observed teacher, clarifying and deconstructing the broad category into identifiable elements. Each of the four levels uses specific criteria that differentiate levels of teacher effectiveness in each of the subcategories.

**Instructional Skills.** Teachers with effective instructional skills are defined by the Teacher Effectiveness Scale as using methods that organize instruction “by maintaining and communicating a focus on instruction, demonstrating high expectations for students, allocating time, and engaging in effective planning.” [Additionally], responsive instruction hinges on a flexibility and facility with a variety of teaching

strategies” (Stronge, 2010, p.3). This broad category is divided into six subcategories: instructional differentiation, instructional focus on learning, instructional clarity, instructional complexity, expectations for student learning, and use of technology.

**Assessment Skills.** According to Stronge’s 2010 Teacher Effectiveness Scale, teachers with effective assessment skills are able to “use a variety of assessment practices to monitor student learning, including formal and informal assessments and formative and summative assessments. Assessments are used to monitor progress, provide feedback to students and parents, and to adjust instruction” (p. 6). This broad category is divided into two subcategories, assessment for understanding and quality of verbal feedback to students.

**Classroom Learning Environment.** Effectiveness in the classroom learning environment is demonstrated when teachers “ create an overall classroom environment conducive to learning with skills in organization and classroom management; [coupled with being] consistent in their behavioral expectations and responses, and attends to these elements in a proactive way to establish a positive classroom climate oriented toward learning” (Stronge, 2010, p. 9). This category is divided into two subcategories, classroom management and classroom organization.

**Personal Qualities.** Effective teachers, in the category of Personal Qualities, demonstrate the ability to “relate with students and to make positive, caring connections with them plays a significant part in supporting the learning environment and student achievement. Effective teachers care about their students and demonstrate that caring so that students are conscious of it” (Stronge, 2010, p. 11). This category addresses five

subcategories that are rated on four different levels: Caring, Fairness and Respect, Positive Relationships, Encouragement of Responsibility, and Enthusiasm.



## **Case Findings**

Each of the six cases presented below specifically addresses observation data gathered for each participant in these four categories and all of their subcategories. Examples from the observations are provided and descriptive information gleaned from the one-on-one participant interviews is woven into the thick, rich description of each participant's case. The data from the Personal Qualities quadrant of the Teacher Effectiveness Scale (TES), coupled with individual interview responses, specifically address the dispositions and practices used to create positive teacher-student relationships with African-American elementary male students.

Praise and positive communication, high expectations, and additional instructional support and care are the three themes that emerged as research participants discussed relationship building strategies for both African-American elementary male students and non-African-American elementary students. Across all six cases, research participants cited examples of how they used verbal and non-verbal praise and positive communication to interact with their students, including their African-American male students for compliance on a direction or task completion. The disposition of praise and positive communication was perceived as needed by two of the six teacher participants in forging positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students.

Teachers who have positive expectations for their students often have positive teacher-student relationships. The necessity of having high expectations for all students was observed across all six cases in a classroom setting. The necessity of having high expectations for African-American male elementary students was observed in two of the

six cases. The need for additional instructional support and care was a unique factor in building teacher-student relationships with African-American elementary male students as indicated in five of the six cases.

There were outlier data gathered from some of the participants that is relevant to the phenomenon of building teacher-student relationships. Two of the research participants perceived that learning about a student's background will allow teachers to make informed decisions in determining instruction for the students coupled with specific strategies for forging relationships with the student and his or her families. Each of the participants discussed classroom management practices that they utilize in their classrooms. Mrs. Orange used praise towards an African-American male student as a positive classroom management strategy for changing the behaviors of the students seated near him. This use of praise was unique to this research participant. Teachers that have orderly classrooms due to strong classroom management strategies can be perceived as being effective at creating learning environments where students can feel safe and instructional time is the focus, leading to the formation of positive teacher-student relationships.

#### **Case #1 Overview Mrs. Red**

Mrs. Red was an African-American female Kindergarten teacher at School A. She had taught for over 35 years in at least three school districts during her teaching career. During this research study, she delivered instruction to two African-American male students. Mrs. Red retired at the end of this research study, ending a lengthy career in education.

Mrs. Red created a positive learning environment for all of her students, including African-American male students, through the use of verbal praise and positive verbal and non-verbal communication. Her purpose for the use of verbal praise appeared to be to affirm the academic work of her students, to build their self-esteem for positive behavioral choices, and to provide assurance to them that she cared about them. Mrs. Red did not discuss her high expectations for her African-American male students during her individual interview. However, it was observed that all students in her classroom were held accountable for their classroom work on the skill being taught. It can be perceived that the high expectations that Mrs. Red had for her students were easily brought to fruition through the quality of verbal feedback and instructional clarity she provided to her students. Mrs. Red's provision of additional instructional support or care impacts African-American male students' success in the classroom setting. When Mrs. Red gives individual students direct instruction due to their lack of understanding, this additional support can be perceived as providing comfort to students and making them feel empowered to be academically successful.

#### **Case #2 Overview Mrs. Orange**

Mrs. Orange was a Caucasian female Kindergarten teacher at School C. She had taught for 11 years in at least two school districts. She had a full-day para-educator in her classroom. There were four African-American elementary male students in her classroom.

Mrs. Orange believed strongly that she must have positive relationships with her students. She explained that teachers need to take the time to get to know their students. "Sometimes it's nice to sit and chat with a kid for 2 minutes, 5 minutes, and if you are

standing in line really ask them about their weekend and really taking a vested interest in which they are, they thrive on that.” She consistently smiled at students and frequently laughed with the students. Mrs. Orange was observed making positive comments such as, “T---- (African-American male) I like what a good listener you are being...I like the way M-- is using a 2-finger space...I like the way----is ready...I like the way-----traced his letters (African-American male),” to her kindergarten students.

Mrs. Orange perceived that praise and positive communication are dispositions needed to build successful and positive relationships with all students but especially African-American male elementary students. She was observed setting high expectations for all students in her classroom. During the individual interview, Mrs. Orange shared an experience about an African-American male elementary student in her classroom whose academic performance she described as lackluster but because she cared and held high expectations for the student, she communicated her concerns to his parents. She said,

I think this child understood that I cared enough to make contact with his parents...He was able to really take hold of those opportunities that were given to him...and he was able to thrive on them. So I think for him just knowing that he was surrounded by a team of people that cared about him... He rose to those expectations and has really succeeded.

Mrs. Orange’s provision of additional instructional support and care for African-American male students can be interpreted as a means for opening doors for students who may not have otherwise had an opportunity to be successful academically. This African-American male responded to the additional instructional support Mrs. Orange proposed to

his family by transforming his lackadaisical attitude into one where academic excellence became an internal compass.

### **Case #3 Overview Mrs. Yellow**

Mrs. Yellow is a Caucasian female first grade teacher at School A. She has taught for four years at the same school. She does not have an assigned para-educator to help her through the day. Mrs. Yellow provided instruction to three African-American elementary male students during this research study.

Mrs. Yellow answered her students' questions with a positive tone and often nodded her head to non-verbally communicate her acceptance of their work and responses. She did smile at students working in her reading group. There were not specific examples of verbal praise observed in Mrs. Yellow's classroom. The majority of the observation time, Mrs. Yellow appeared to have a pleasant disposition towards her students. The data from the observation and interview can be interpreted as this participant may be concerned about her students but she does not use praise to convey her concern or care to her students.

Mrs. Yellow stated expectations for her students via a whole group approach. However, when students were off-task or interrupted her small group session to ask multiple questions to clarify the expectations, Mrs. Yellow would raise her voice. Although it was not perceived that she had low expectations for her students, the observational data supports the need for more assessment of understanding amongst the students and effective positive classroom management practices. Mrs. Yellow did not discuss her expectation level for her African-American male students during her individual interview.

The provision of additional guidance for her students is incongruous with some of the behaviors she exhibited in the classroom towards students. It could be perceived that classroom management is not an area of strength for this teacher based on how this participant responded when students asked for assistance on their language arts worksheet. While being interviewed, Mrs. Yellow stated that her chief strategy for forging positive teacher-student relationships is learning about the students. She said, "I think it's important to get to know them because if ...they feel that you care about them, they are more willing to do things you ask of them and try their best at doing those things." Mrs. Yellow was not observed demonstrating a caring act towards students. It could be perceived that the relationship between this research participant and her students may not be entirely positive despite Mrs. Yellow's self-rating on the Student Teacher Relationship Scale.

#### **Case #4 Overview Mrs. Green**

Mrs. Green is a Caucasian female second grade teacher at school A. She has taught for 20 years. There is not an assigned para-educator assigned to work with Mrs. Green. She instructed three African-American male students during this research study. Mrs. Green perceives that by providing students with clear academic and behavioral expectations that they will follow her rules and directives. She constantly integrated movement into her classroom instruction of Reading and other content information. She had the students to get up from their desks every 10-15 minutes to move to various locations in the classroom to show their answers and made the learning fun and “game-like.”

#### **Case #5 Overview Mrs. Blue**

Mrs. Blue is a Caucasian female third grade teacher at School A. During this research study, she delivered instruction to three African-American male students in her classroom. There is not a para-educator assigned to her classroom because she is an upper elementary teacher. She has taught for eight years in two different school divisions.

Mrs. Blue was observed smiling at her students and verbally encouraging and praising her students. If she is perceived by her African-American male students as approachable then they will be able to receive additional support from her, thus having a positive impact on their relationship with her. It is perceived that Mrs. Blue has consistent classroom management practices in her classroom because her students followed her directives about handling the laptops. Teachers that have high expectations of their students often have strong classroom management practices.

### **Case #6 Overview Mrs. Purple**

Mrs. Purple is an African-American female Kindergarten teacher at School B. During this research study, she delivered instruction to two African-American male students in her classroom. There is a para-educator assigned to her classroom for a portion of the school day because she is a Kindergarten teacher. She has taught for about 15 years in several school divisions.

The ability to have a conversation with students to discuss either academic or behavior expectations is integral to creating a positive relationship between teachers and students as perceived by Mrs. Purple. She also felt that the use of praise and positive communication by teachers towards students creates a classroom climate of openness and emotional safety for students, hence creating an environment conducive to positive teacher-student relationships. Often the praise showered on students by teachers, can be perceived as the result of student compliance with the teachers' learning and/or behavioral expectations. Mrs. Purple perceived that having high expectations for African-American male students coupled with consistent classroom management practices may provide a structured learning environment where these students can be successful.



### Findings for Research Questions: Cross Case Analysis

**Research Question 1:** *What are the key dispositions exhibited by teachers who form successful teacher-student relationships in the elementary classroom setting?*

The cross case analysis of the six cases in this research study, using the data gathered from the two classroom observations of each classroom teacher overlaid with the individual interview data, show that there are factors that attribute to positive teacher-student relationships with all students. The teachers that participated in this research study perceived that the use of praise and positive communication along with having high expectations are dispositions that impact and assist in forming successful teacher-student relationships in an elementary classroom setting. Table Six provides details for more of those findings.

**Table 6. Teachers' perception of dispositions for forming successful teacher-student relationships in the elementary classroom setting**

Teachers	Praise/Positive Communication	High Expectations	Additional Support & Care
Red	X	X	
Orange	X	X	
Yellow		X	
Green	X	X	
Blue	X	X	
Purple	X	X	

**Praise and Positive Communication.** Each participant was observed demonstrating examples of verbal praise towards their students. Looking across all six cases, the research participants perceived that by praising their students, that they were able to affirm the academic work of their students. Mrs. Red was observed providing

praise to her kindergarteners for following classroom directions and completing tasks appropriately. Mrs. Red consistently made endearing remarks to her students such as, "Thank you Babe...Here Baby, put them here...Darling...thank you for...Thank you M-----, C-----, and A---- for ...." She also positively praised the students for any act of compliance and effort in the classroom. Mrs. Red's observed comments and verbal feedback towards students was positive. Students' response to Mrs. Red's words was a smile, indicating the student's sense of affirmation about their answer to the teacher's question. Kindergarteners in Mrs. Red's class were comfortable in her presence and in response to her verbal feedback towards them.

Other forms of praise and communication that Mrs. Red perceived were effective in forging teacher-student relationships were,

A smile works wonders. Praise, high fives, a positive note to the parents, big smiley stickers on papers; whether it's right or wrong still get a sticker on that paper and thank you for your effort. You know I do the penny cups. I give out pennies, and we have the buckets on the tables. Praise seems to work the best. Now I'm one of those who likes to call the home once in a while to say something positive, not to just something your child has done inappropriate at school. And that kinda hooks the parents in too... You have to be positive with the student and the parent. Negatives, negative notes and phone calls will not help. You have to get the parent and the student to buy-in to what you are doing in

the classroom. They already have enough problems at home without you adding to it... you have to go a step farther.

During the observation, Mrs. Red consistently verbally praised the students for their acts of compliance and kindness towards each other. Due to the incorporation of movement in the classroom and measurement practice, 100% of the students were engaged in the math curriculum. Mrs. Red praised her students for their on-task behavior during this activity coupled with checking for their understanding of the math skill.

The praise and positive verbal feedback that Mrs. Orange provided her kindergarteners was used to encourage her student, while still reinforcing her learning expectations for them. An example of her praise was "I like how C--- took that opportunity to fix the capital letter at the beginning of that sentence." The researcher observed Mrs. Orange say,

Aww....why do you like Frog so much? You have on the perfect skirt for it" "I like the way S----- (AA male) is using our yellow word wall to find that word because he's spelling it right like a first grader.

During the interview, Mrs. Green shared that,

having a 1 on 1 relationship w/ the students where you can pull them in and talk with them, even if it's [about] academics. It can be with behavior. It can be whatever, the situation that you need to call them one-on-one and speak to them about, to kind of make them feel comfortable and safe in their environment.

Mrs. Green used positive communication in the classroom to create an environment that supported students, creating a relaxed and comfortable learning environment. In the classroom she was heard giving encouraging words to a Caucasian female student who expressed concern that she might not do well on the test. Mrs. Green responded, "You're going to do well." Her comments to students were void of sarcasm and done respectfully.

Mrs. Blue provided verbal and non-verbal praise to her students to affirm their correct responses and to encourage them as they completed their assignments. Her caring disposition towards her students created a calm learning environment. Mrs. Purple provided students with praise for their abilities to appropriately meet academic and behavioral expectations, an example is her comment, "Very Good," made to an African-American male at the back math table. Mrs. Purple was observed verbally praising a student with the "You Got It" phrase.

**High Expectations.** The teachers that participated in this research study perceived that having high expectations for students is a disposition that leads to successful teacher-student relationships in the elementary classroom setting. Mrs. Red discussed the high expectations for her kindergarten students. Her instructional practices demonstrated that when Mrs. Red's expectations for her students were coupled with a clear visual model, students would be able to replicate her actions independently at their seats. An example of this expectation is when students were instructed to draw a black circle on the inside of the red vinyl plate; and then raise their hand once they had completed that task. The teacher then drew a black vertical line with the marker on the red vinyl plate and had students do the same on their red vinyl plates.

Mrs. Red's students were instructed to write the fraction, one half, on the left side of the plate and on the right side of the plate. Mrs. Red reminded students to check their handwriting for number directionality correctness. She demonstrated the proper way to write the number two. She was heard to say, "Thinking so smart" to several students as praise as she checked for student understanding.

In Mrs. Orange's classroom, a blue hanging chart containing cards with words in clear pockets listed all the expectations for the students was found in plain view for the students to see. Mrs. Orange reiterated her expectations for her students by praising those students that were following directions and complying with her learning expectations. She was heard to say,

I like how C---'s following directions...I like how C---- is using  
an uppercase Y...I like the way S----- is using our yellow word  
wall to find that word because he's spelling it right like a first grader  
...Tell me more about addition.

When students asked Mrs. Orange if they could paint, she respectfully and firmly stated she would select which students would paint. Redirection and direct guidance was given to students respectfully, not sarcastically. Mrs. Orange consistently walked around the classroom monitoring student performance and behavior. Her expectation was that when she clapped her hands one time, a signal for students to quiet down, that the students would comply and clap their hands. Students were complimented by Mrs. Orange for their compliance with her expectations throughout the observation.

Mrs. Orange asked students to complete the last four of the eight problems independently because her learning expectation for them was that they would practice

their addition skills. Mrs. Orange stated that for students who may be hearing negative comments about school from their parents, “they are coming to kindergarten with that then you really gotta make the change to let them see that ‘That’s not how it’s going to be for you. I have bigger plans for you.’ High expectations then I would say would be the key.” Mrs. Orange’s learning expectations for her students was reiterated through the praise and verbal feedback that she provided her kindergarteners.

Mrs. Yellow had expectations for her students’ learning in her classroom. She was observed explaining her learning expectations and directions for completing the reading worksheet and participation in the reading group to her students as they sat at her feet whole group. It was evident that Mrs. Green has expectations for her students. She was heard to say,

I think it’s important that the teacher be honest with the child about expectations as well, there needs to be that defined understanding between the two and if there is then you are always honest with them about, like I said your expectations and how you feel about them.

Mrs. Blue was observed sharing expectations for her students for their Famous Person project. She did give them autonomy to select which researched information they would use to meet the criteria stated in the project rubric. Her students will be successful at researching because Mrs. Blue has provided clear instructions. Mrs. Blue was very clear in telling students the consequences for dropping their laptop on the floor would result in “you don’t get to use a laptop anymore this year and you go straight to red.”

Mrs. Purple consistently stated her learning and behavioral expectations at the beginning of her instruction, setting the stage for what she wanted her students to

accomplish. The teachers' expectations in this research study often looked and sounded like clear directions for student learning and student behavior. Behavioral expectations were often managed through effective classroom management practices

**Research Question 2:** *What are the key dispositions exhibited by teachers form positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students?*

The cross case analysis of the six cases in this research study, using the data gathered from the two classroom observations of each classroom teacher overlaid with the individual interview data, show that dispositions such as additional instructional support and care, attribute to forging positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students. Five of the six teachers that participated in this research study perceived that African-American male elementary students benefit from additional instructional support and overall care as an effort to create a positive teacher-student relationship with this population of students. Two of the six participants felt that praise and positive communication were dispositions exhibited by teachers that were factors in forging positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students. Lastly, two of the six participants perceived that having high expectations for this subset of students is a disposition that teachers that have positive teacher-student relationships with their African-American male elementary students should exhibit. Table 7 provides details for more of those findings.

**Table 7. Teachers' perception of dispositions for forming positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students**

Teachers	Praise/Positive Communication	High Expectations	Additional Instructional Support & Care
Red			X

<b>Orange</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Yellow</b>			<b>X</b>
<b>Green</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Blue</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>Purple</b>			<b>X</b>

**Additional instructional support and care.** The data from this research study revealed that providing additional instructional support and care are dispositions that are helpful in developing positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students in an elementary classroom setting. This finding was not inclusive of all six cases but noted with five of the six participants. It was not mentioned by Mrs. Orange during the individual interviews.

Mrs. Red shared her perception of what practices made her teacher-student relationships with African-American male students positive during the interview. She said,

Being African-American myself, I understand that [African-American elementary male students] just need a little more attention sometimes. Gotta have it. You just cannot be a rough and gruff teacher and by the book all the time. They just cannot handle that. Everybody's always fussing at them, putting them on punishment, and taking things away from them, and that just makes it worse for them. They will not perform for you. Will not do their work, not even try. But if [their] teacher says, "You didn't do your homework last night, can you come over here and I'll help



you do it,” and in a couple of minutes they’re fine. The purpose is to get it completed not to fuss and argue...

The need for additional instructional support and care is a factor in establishing positive teacher-student relationships.

The theme of mothering or additional support in maneuvering through non-academic events was brought forward when Mrs. Yellow was asked about her relationships with African-American elementary males. She noted that, “giving positive feedback to the children when they ask you stuff, answering questions...” was integral to forming teacher-student relationships with African-American male students. Additionally, “some of them [African-American male students] looked to me for more guidance than others did. They looked to me as not only a teacher but a mother figure in the classroom.”

Mrs. Green shared that African-American male students’ “socio-economic status and low academics make them unique.” It can be perceived that because African-American male students have limited financial resources at home and are unsuccessful academically that they will need additional instructional support and care throughout the school year. She also perceived that for African-American elementary male students, “as long as they saw that I was on their side and there to help them, even though they might get frustrated at days, I didn’t leave them...and was a constant in their life.” Mrs. Green perceived that it’s necessary for teachers to create a sense of stability for the African-American male students in their classrooms.

Mrs. Green was observed giving direct instruction to an African-American male student to try each sound in an effort to decode the word that he was having difficulty

decoding. "Try. You can do it. Try the next one. Sound it out. Skip it and go to the next one" were her words of guidance. Mrs. Green continued to monitor his progress. She was heard to tell him, "That's a good way to try it." Her unwillingness to allow him to give up when challenged can be interpreted that she has high expectations for this student and it's her desire that he become successful in decoding and reading unfamiliar words. Additionally, Mrs. Green perceived her positive communication and verbal feedback as having a positive impact on the African American elementary male students in her classroom.

Mrs. Blue also shared her strategies and experiences with forging positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male students and the need for additional instructional support and care. She expressed that,

[at] the school I came from [there] was a lot more African-American males. It was a lot lower income school so...they came with baggage, a lot of them. They came from single family homes where it was usually only mom. And there was usually a lot of siblings in the house. So they came needing a little bit extra love, extra attention. And for some of them it was harder to form relationships...because everyone they have gotten close to maybe has hurt them. So it was just taking that extra step... Some students...you know if they did good for a week, I would take them to Chic-Fil-A for lunch or they would get to go here or there with me. So, it was just

making them know that you were going to be there no matter what.

It is Mrs. Blue's perception that African-American male students, whose families have a low socioeconomic status, often have a lot of siblings and their mother is typically the head of the household. These students, based on her comments, are managing a number of problems or issues as a result of their home life. That is, due to the issues surrounding the home life of African-American male students, their lack of trust, and lack of attention from their parent, that teachers must provide them with additional care and attention to build a relationship with them. Mrs. Blue notes that factors outside of school may influence the relationship she forms with African-American male students and that she perceives extra care and attention is needed.

Mrs. Purple agreed that providing additional instructional support and care is helpful for creating positive teacher-student relationships with African-American elementary male students.

[My] student was having a difficult time ... writing and to getting his sentences and his structure together. He had the skills but he was having a difficult time putting it into the right format. And so the student had a little breakdown and so I called him up to work with him one-on-one and to help him figure out "well you have this and you have this" so put it together and see what it says. So I think that was one positive moment out of many that I have had with African-American students...And I think that sometimes you have to

reach them personally because you may not know what's going on in their family or at home. And of course you know it comes to school; they bring it to school. So you have to be aware and understanding your students to know well this student may be having a bad day today. And what can I do to motivate him, or to help him with anything that we are doing in the classroom. So I just think that many days in situation like that, it's just taking the time to have an extra few minutes to give them that attention. To know that I care about what you are doing. And I'm here to help you and we can get through this together.

Mrs. Purple shared her perception of strategies that are unique to African-American elementary male students centered on the need for teachers to be observant of their students' mood and disposition when they arrive at school. She perceived that by inquiring about the well being of African-American male students consistently that their trust level for her would increase.

**Praise and positive communication.** Mrs. Orange's use of praise for African-American male students in her class can be perceived as a means of validation for their academic efforts. It was also observed that this participant's use of praise for this African-American male student doubled as a positive classroom management strategy for altering the behavior of other students seated near this student. The other male students seated at the same table as this African-American male student, were exhibiting off-task behavior prior to Mrs. Orange's positive verbal feedback about S-----'s use of the word

wall. The other male students' reaction to Mrs. Orange's praise of S-----, was indicative that her praise can be perceived as a deterrent to their off-task behavior.

In response to a question about strategies that are unique to African-American male students, Mrs. Blue shared the use of a, "consistently calm voice" coupled with the appearance of being "happy to see them, [and that] they are not bothering you, they are not bugging you, you are proud of them no matter what they do." Mrs. Blue perceived that her disposition of praise and positive communication increased her African-American male students' comfort level in approaching her to ask questions.

**High Expectations.** Mrs. Orange's noted that holding high expectations for an African-American male student in her classroom, resulted in this African-American male student, according to her, "performing according to his potential and no longer from a spirit of laziness." During the interview, Mrs. Orange described her expectations for this African-American male elementary student in her class. During a speakerphone conference with both parents, she began to share with them the direction that this male elementary student was choosing. She said,

I didn't feel was really where he should be going; [it] was not indicative of what his potential could be in kindergarten. I told them that I really believed that he could be stepping up his game and laid out some ideas for them as to what they could be doing at home...And they followed through with it.

Due to the conversation that Mrs. Orange had with that African-American elementary male student's parents, they enlisted his grandmother to provide academic support for her grandson after school.

We went from a homework journal where it was just a very lackadaisical, lackluster result. You could tell he wasn't putting any kind of effort into it. He was going through the motions and it was getting done but, I knew it was not the quality of work of which he was capable of doing. The student's attitude towards his work transformed from "Eh, I'm gonna get this done" to something he is just beaming over at the end of the school year. Therefore "he's been really proud of the work that he has been doing with his grandmother."

Mrs. Green was observed working with an African-American male elementary student, restating her learning expectations for him. Her desire that he become successful in decoding and reading unfamiliar words is evidenced through her unwillingness to allow him to give up when challenged. This disposition can be interpreted that she has high expectations for this student.

**Research Question 3:***What are teacher practices in working with all students in their classes, including African American male students, for teachers who demonstrated positive teacher-student relationships?*

The Teacher Effectiveness Scale captures the data gathered from the two classroom observations of each classroom teacher. It shows practices that teachers exhibit in their elementary classroom settings that have a positive teacher-student relationship. These data show that there are specific instructional and assessment skills that teacher with a positive teacher-student relationship with students display. There are also specific elements displayed in the classroom learning environment that teachers that have a positive teacher-student relationship with students incorporate in their classrooms and daily routines. Lastly, there are personal qualities that these teachers possess that can be perceived to help foster positive teacher-student relationships. Table Eight provides more details about those findings.

**Table 8. Participant data from Teacher Effectiveness Scale**

	Mrs. Red Observation #1	Mrs. Red Observation #2	Mrs. Orange Observation #1	Mrs. Orange Observation #2	Mrs. Yellow Observation #1	Mrs. Yellow Observation #2	Mrs. Green Observation #1	Mrs. Green Observation #2	Mrs. Blue Observation #1	Mrs. Blue Observation #2	Mrs. Purple Observation #1	Mrs. Purple Observation #2
<b>Instructional Skills</b>	3	2	4	4	2	2	4	2	3	3	4	3
Instructional Differentiation												
Instructional Focus on Learning	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	4
Instructional Clarity	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	4
Instructional Complexity	4	3	4	4	2	1	2	2	4	3	3	3
Expectations for Student Learning	3	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3
Use of Technology	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	3	1
<b>Assessment Skills</b>	4	4	4	4	3	1	4	3	4	3	4	4
Assessment for Understanding												
Quality of Verbal Feedback to	3	4	3	3	2	2	3	4	3	2	4	3



Students												
<b>Classroom Learning Environment</b> Classroom Management	3	4	4	4	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	3
Classroom Organization	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3
<b>Personal Qualities</b> Caring	4	4	3	4	3	2	4	4	3	3	4	4
Fairness and Respect	3	3	4	4	3	2	4	4	3	3	3	3
Positive Relationships	4	4	4	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	4	3
Encouragement of Responsibility	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	4	3	3
Enthusiasm	4	4	4	4	3	2	4	3	3	2	3	3

## **Instructional Skills**

### **Mrs. Red**

The instructional skills of Mrs. Red, this veteran teacher, were demonstrated through instructional differentiation, focus on learning, instructional clarity and complexity, and expectations for student learning. Please see Table Nine for details.

**Table 9. Instructional Skills – Mrs. Red**

<b>Instructional Skills</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Instructional Differentiation	4	2
Instructional Focus on Learning	3	3
Instructional Clarity	4	4
Instructional Complexity	4	3
Expectations for Student Learning	3	3
Use of Technology	1	1

In the first observation, Mrs. Red used instructional strategies that met the learning needs of individual students in her class, contrast to the second observation, in which her instructional strategies were more focused towards the class as a whole. She was observed giving her kindergarten students time at the beginning of the measurement lesson time to roam the room so they could practice measuring various objects using nonstandard items. Mrs. Red's learning expectations for her students were realized in this activity.

Mrs. Red's focus on learning was apparent in the manner that she limited non-instructional distractions and interruptions. She was observed regularly checking on students about every four minutes while working with a small group of students at the back kidney table, measuring colored water in graduated cylinders. This consistent checking for understanding was a strategy used to manage students in the classroom.

Mrs. Red quietly redirected a Caucasian male student that began to throw dice in the classroom and showed the child how to correctly roll the dice on the floor. Instructional clarity was a strength demonstrated by Mrs. Red as she gave each student at least 1-2 minutes of individual attention to assess their understanding of the task of measuring with nonstandard items. She consistently stopped to redirect and remediate students in the classroom on how to properly measure items.

Mrs. Red was observed moving questioning and instruction beyond basic recall for her kindergarten students in the classroom. She asked students to identify and write the number and the word name for various fractions, coupled with being able to create a pictorial representation of the fraction, during the second observation. Mrs. Red demonstrated that she had high expectations for her students. An African-American female student was not measuring properly with the unifix cubes, so Mrs. Red showed her how to stack the unifix cubes so that she could properly measure objects in the classroom. Mrs. Red's classroom management strategies reinforced her high expectations for students to learn and behave in the classroom. Students were expected to raise their hands when they had a question or wanted to participate to minimize disruptions. Lots of praise was given to the students for their compliance. Mrs. Red's high expectations for her students both academically and behaviorally impact her students' performance in her classroom and her relationship with the students.

Technology was not infused into instruction during the classroom observations. During the second observation, Mrs. Red used the flex camera to provide students with visual models of the fraction assignment that they were completing. Kindergarten students, due to their young age, need a vast amount of concrete experiences before they

are able to understand abstract concepts. This may have attributed to why Mrs. Red did not infuse as much technology into her instruction compared to upper elementary teachers.

### **Mrs. Orange**

Mrs. Orange was observed exercising effective instructional practices. Instructional differentiation, instructional clarity, focus on learning, instructional complexity, and expectations for students were strengths for Mrs. Orange. However, there was a limited usage of technology infused in her instruction. Please see Table 10 for more details.

**Table 10. Instructional Skills – Mrs. Orange**

<b>Instructional Skills</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Instructional Differentiation	4	4
Instructional Focus on Learning	4	3
Instructional Clarity	3	3
Instructional Complexity	4	4
Expectations for Student Learning	4	4
Use of Technology	1	1

Mrs. Orange differentiated her instruction to her kindergarten students. She was observed providing math instruction through a Math Talk problem written on the white board easel. Another example is her infusion of kinesthetic activities into her instruction such as having students physically enacting the movement of animals and kids from the poem read aloud from the reading basal book. Mrs. Orange maintained a strong focus on the teaching and learning process in the classroom. It is clear that academic learning time is the focus of Mrs. Orange's instruction. Mrs. Orange was heard telling the students, "Pointer (index finger) on your bird (picture on the math worksheet) and pencil in your hand. Put everything away so it doesn't distract you."

Instructional Clarity was a strength for Mrs. Orange. The researcher observed Mrs. Orange providing concrete and abstract examples of addition on the whiteboard. She also gave the students some practice in adding single digit numbers together while they were on the carpet. The complexity of Mrs. Orange's instruction was observed, as the kindergarteners had to synthesize the information from the Frog and Toad story read the day before, into a friendly letter addressing why they should be forgiven for their actions in the story and their thankfulness for having a friend like Frog or Toad.

Mrs. Orange had expectations for student learning in her classroom. These positive student expectations impact the teacher-student relationships that Mrs. Orange forged with her students. She expressed to her students that they would quietly focus on their assignment by repeating the saying, "Fingers don't talk." The teacher asked students to complete the last four of the eight problems independently so students could really practice their addition skills.

The use of technology was not consistently observed in Mrs. Orange's classroom, however, her use of the flexible camera to provide students with instructional examples during math instruction on addition. Mrs. Orange chose to have students utilize a more hands-on approach due to the students' need for concrete practice with abstract concepts, during the observations.

### **Mrs. Yellow**

Mrs. Yellow was observed exercising effective instructional practices. Instructional clarity, focus on learning, and expectations for students were strengths for Mrs. Yellow. However, there was a limited usage of technology infused in her instruction. Please see Table 11 for more details.

**Table 11. Instructional Skills – Mrs. Yellow**

<b>Instructional Skills</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Instructional Differentiation	2	2
Instructional Focus on Learning	3	3
Instructional Clarity	3	3
Instructional Complexity	2	1
Expectations for Student Learning	3	3
Use of Technology	1	1

Based on the observations, it was clear that Mrs. Yellow delivers instruction to her students that are clear on a consistent basis. An example of instructional clarity is the researcher observed Mrs. Yellow providing guidance to a student in the reading group on how to decode effectively because he is having trouble decoding a word. She also asked students in the reading group clarifying questions about the reading story to ensure they understand what they have read. Mrs. Yellow had expectations for her students' learning in her classroom. She had her students to sit at her feet on the carpet, while she explained her expectations, rules, and directions for completing the reading worksheet and for participation in the reading group. The instructional environment that Mrs. Yellow has created in her classroom, incorporating her high expectations for student learning, promotes a positive relationship between her and her students.

**Mrs. Green**

Mrs. Green was observed exercising successful instructional practices. Instructional differentiation, instructional clarity, focus on learning, and expectations for students were strengths for Mrs. Green. However, there was a limited usage of technology infused in her instruction. Please see Table 12 for more details.

**Table 12. Instructional Skills – Mrs. Green**

<b>Instructional Skills</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Instructional Differentiation	4	2
Instructional Focus on Learning	4	3
Instructional Clarity	4	3
Instructional Complexity	2	2
Expectations for Student Learning	4	3
Use of Technology	1	1

Mrs. Green was observed using the flex camera to review instructions on how students should complete their reading assessment. She placed a capital P in the left margin of the test to denote which questions the students were expected to prove their answers. Mrs. Green then pointed to question #25. She asked the students to raise their hands if they thought they needed to prove their answer for this question and the next question too. Mrs. Green differentiated her instruction for her students and kept the focus on student learning in the classroom. This type of instructional practice increased student engagement, diminished student misbehavior, and provided a learning environment conducive to positive teacher-student relationships.

The distractions were minimized in the classroom by Mrs. Green. An African-American male student blurted out an answer during the instruction review however; Mrs. Green placed her index finger to her lips and stated, “Raise your hand.” The same male student began to talk while another student asked a question. The teacher gave him a glance with raised eyebrows and calmly stated, “Thank you.”

Instructional clarity was evidenced by Mrs. Green as she provided the students with test-taking strategy reminders such as “Pay attention to the way a word ends. Don’t

let the test trick you.” Mrs. Green told students to look at each word and read directions for each word. She provided direct instruction to an Asian male student who had difficulty with long/short vowel sounds. The complexity of Mrs. Green’s instructional practices was observed as she guided her students through a word study activity. She asked the students to infer simple main ideas about the reading text and to sort words by vowel sounds. As she pointed to question number 25, she asked the students to raise their hands if they thought they needed to prove their answer for this question. Several students raised their hands and shared their ideas of proof for the question.

Mrs. Green was observed in the classroom providing expectations to her students for work completion. She provided direct instruction to an Asian male student who had difficulty with long/short vowel sounds. Mrs. Green asked an African-American male student a direct question. She gave him a high-five for his correct answer and the manner that he raised his hand to respond. Technology usage was only seen as Mrs. Green used the flex camera to review instructions with the students on how they should complete their reading assessment.

### **Mrs. Blue**

Mrs. Blue was observed exercising effective instructional practices. Instructional differentiation, instructional focus on learning, instructional clarity, instructional complexity, and expectations for student learning were strengths for Mrs. Blue. However, there was a limited usage of technology infused in her instruction. Please see Table 13 for more details.



**Table 13. Instructional Skills – Mrs. Blue**

<b>Instructional Skills</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Instructional Differentiation	3	3
Instructional Focus on Learning	3	3
Instructional Clarity	3	4
Instructional Complexity	4	3
Expectations for Student Learning	3	3
Use of Technology	1	4

Mrs. Blue was observed using a variety of questioning methods when prompting students to make predictions about the reading story, while working with students in her reading group. The students were directed to cut out their differentiated Words Their Way word study words. They had to lay out 3 header words, then sort words and determine the number of syllables in each word. However, during the second observation, Mrs. Blue was observed quietly giving a Caucasian female student the RIGBY reading assessment at the back kidney table.

Instructional Clarity was a strength for Mrs. Blue. She stated, “I need everyone’s attention so they will know what to do [for the Famous Person project].” Mrs. Blue reviewed rules for the classroom, in a whole group manner, on how to use the computers in the classroom. She discussed all of the Do’s and Don’ts. She wrote on the board the specific research items that students were responsible for finding out about their assigned person that included Date of Birth, Date of Death, Where the person was born, Three important facts about why they are important, and three other random facts. Mrs. Blue gave clear examples of good and bad reasons why the famous person was important, and would be graded for Social Studies and Writing. She stated what components of their projects would be assessed for Social Studies and Writing. She explained that for Social Studies, she will be checking to see if the students have facts. Under the Writing category,

she will be assessing for the quality of their writing skills. “Do you have good almost fourth-grade sentences and paragraphs? A good beginning and ending?” She continued to say, “Get what you need first to get done and don’t get stuck adding in ten other facts.”

Mrs. Blue’s instructional complexity was evidenced through her questioning of students. During an observation, she shared with a student the title and summary of the story that they were reading. She stated the definition of realistic fiction for the students and then asked them, “What makes the story realistic fiction?” Mrs. Blue then asked if the conversation between the animals in the story made the story realistic fiction or not. The students were tasked with defining the author’s purpose of the story, along with what other genres the story might fit into and why. The students raised their hands and participated in the oral discussion in the classroom.

Based on the observations, Mrs. Blue’s expectations for student learning were often centered on seat work or specific tasks that students were to complete in the classroom. She provided the students with clear expectations about the Famous Person project that they would be completing in the classroom. She advised them to “get what you need first to get done and don’t get stuck adding in ten other facts. And if the laptop touches the floor, you don’t get to use a laptop anymore this year and you go straight to red.” Mrs. Blue was also very adamant about student behavior during the selection of each student’s assigned famous person. She instructed the students, “You will pick your famous person from the hat. I don’t wanna hear, ‘Oh man!’ ‘Wanna trade’ ‘You get what you get and don’t throw a fit’ as she walked around with the hat. As the students reached their hand into the hat and selected the name of the person that they would research; they heeded their teacher’s warnings and didn’t grimace or attempt to trade

names with their peers. Teachers like Mrs. Blue, that have high academic and behavioral expectations for their students often have positive teacher-student relationships.

Although technology was not infused into the instruction during the first observation, Mrs. Blue did have her students using individual laptops to research their assigned person for the joint Social Studies/Writing project. Usage of technology is an effective method of engaging students in learning. Teachers that use technology do not necessarily have positive teacher-student relationships however; teachers with engaging instruction have a better understanding of their students, which typically results in positive relationships with their students.

### **Mrs. Purple**

Mrs. Purple was masterful in exercising effective instructional practices. Instructional differentiation, focus on learning, instructional clarity, instructional complexity, expectations for student learning, and technology use were strengths for Mrs. Purple. Please see Table 14 for more details.

**Table 14. Instructional Skills – Mrs. Purple**

<b>Instructional Skills</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Instructional Differentiation	4	3
Instructional Focus on Learning	4	4
Instructional Clarity	4	4
Instructional Complexity	3	3
Expectations for Student Learning	4	3
Use of Technology	3	1

Mrs. Purple was effective in differentiating instruction for her kindergarten students during the observations. The students rotated through differentiated centers on measurement, from the whole group setting on the floor. One center was facilitated by the teacher, Mrs. Purple; one was led by the para-educator; and at the third center

students were working independently. When students had an incorrect answer, she provided additional instruction in a quiet voice, exhibiting respect towards them. Mrs. Purple asked the student to erase a part of their answer, reviewed the skill with the student, and then advised the student on how to write the correct answer on their paper.

Mrs. Purple maximized learning time by minimizing non-instructional tasks and distractions. Academic learning was clearly the focus of instruction. This is demonstrated by the manner that Mrs. Purple consistently walked around the classroom monitoring students' performance and providing redirection and guidance as needed. She visually checked the academic performance of students working at the independent writing center to see how they were progressing; as she walked around their table and looked at each student's work. Mrs. Purple instructed an African-American female student, "C---, will you please move your paper over to this side table?" She asked the student to move so that she could focus and complete her work.

Mrs. Purple put effort into clarifying directions for her students to ensure that they understood the instructional task. Mrs. Purple was observed, in a round robin manner, asking each student in her group to state their fractions aloud, after they had created the appropriate fraction using pizza fraction manipulatives. The students worked in pairs to find fractions. She consistently offered guidance and redirection to students as needed; and often smiled at the students working in her group. Mrs. Purple reminded students that they were to have 12 pieces in total. She helped students count their pizza fraction manipulatives. She gave clear directives to students. Mrs. Purple paused to direct an African-American male to transition to the Listening Center from the computer. Her

diligence to keeping students on-task and engaged, foster an environment where students can learn and have positive relationships with their teacher.

Instructional Complexity was demonstrated by Mrs. Purple in the manner that she reviewed with her kindergarten students on how to find  $\frac{1}{2}$  and how many parts are needed for various fractions such as:  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{10}$ ,  $\frac{1}{3}$ ,  $\frac{1}{6}$ ,  $\frac{1}{8}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and  $\frac{1}{12}$ . During the Math block, Mrs. Purple was observed explaining how one can get the same answer to different math problems, such as  $2+2=4$  and  $1+3$  also equals four. She also redirected them to solve math problems vertically instead of horizontally.

Mrs. Purple consistently provided her kindergarten students with clear expectations for their learning. Mrs. Purple stated her learning and behavior expectations for the students at the beginning of the lessons for the students coupled with praise, necessary elements for positive teacher-student relationships. She then asked each student in her group to state their fractions aloud, after they had created the appropriate fraction using pizza fraction manipulatives. Mrs. Purple walked over to where the students were independently working on their Math assignment; and reminded the students to write their names on their paper. She modeled for the students how to write the math equations on their paper by writing examples on a white erase board for the students to see. Mrs. Purple provided clear expectations prior to starting the next math task with “the students. She then passed out materials to the students.

The infusion of technology into instruction was observed during the second observation and not during the first observation. During the first observation, technology was not used at all. However, during the second observation, the students reviewed literacy skills on the computer and used a CD player and headphones (audio equipment)

to navigate the Listening Center. There was evidence of technology use evidenced in the students' work assignments that are posted in the classroom.

### **Assessment Skills**

#### **Mrs. Red**

Assessing students for understanding was a strength for Mrs. Red. She demonstrated strengths in assessing for understanding and for providing quality verbal feedback to students. Please see Table 15 for more details.

**Table 15. Assessment Skills – Mrs. Red**

<b>Assessment Skills</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Assessment for Understanding	4	4
Quality of Verbal Feedback to Students	3	4

Mrs. Red was observed asking the students to hold up their plates, providing her an opportunity to visually check the students' performance and mastery of equal and unequal fractions. Students in the classroom were asked by Mrs. Red to verbally retell what they had learned about fractions. Mrs. Red and the para-educator walked around the classroom monitoring student performance. The verbal feedback that Mrs. Red provided her students either encouraged them or gave them guidance on self-correcting their work. Mrs. Red consistently made endearing remarks to her students such as "Thank you Babe...Here Baby, put them here...Darling...thank you for....". This positive communication assisted in forging positive teacher-student relationships in this classroom.

### **Mrs. Orange**

Mrs. Orange demonstrated strengths in her ability to formally and informally assess students' academic performance and behavior through consistent monitoring. She demonstrated strengths in assessing students for understanding; along with providing quality verbal feedback to students. Please see Table 16 for more details.

**Table 16. Assessment Skills – Mrs. Orange**

<b>Assessment Skills</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Assessment for Understanding	4	4
Quality of Verbal Feedback to Students	3	3

This level of student progress monitoring creates closeness between Mrs. Orange and her students. The researcher observed Mrs. Orange say, “Give me a thumbs up if you have two sentences on your paper.” She then walked around the classroom to monitor students' progress. The quality of verbal feedback that Mrs. Orange provided her kindergarteners was encouraging and challenged them to work to their potential, while reminding them of her expectations for their learning. An example was “I like how C--- took that opportunity to fix the capital letter at the beginning of that sentence.”

### **Mrs. Yellow**

Mrs. Yellow demonstrated strengths in her ability to formally and informally assess students' academic performance and behavior through consistent monitoring. She demonstrated strengths in assessing students for understanding; along with providing quality verbal feedback to students. Please see Table 17 for more details.

**Table 17. Assessment Skills – Mrs. Yellow**

<b>Assessment Skills</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Assessment for Understanding	3	1
Quality of Verbal Feedback to Students	2	2

Mrs. Yellow was observed assessing an African-American male student on the character's role in the weekly reading story. When the student had difficulty answering the question, she restated the question verbatim and then clarified it by restating it differently for the student. However, her ability to assess for understanding was deemed ineffective according to the Teacher Effectiveness Scale because Mrs. Yellow mainly questioned the entire class not individual students. Additionally, it was observed that Mrs. Yellow's verbal feedback to students was negative during the second observation. She responded to a student's question about the vocabulary assignment by stating, "Does post, poster, posttest make sense?" "Is forgettest a word?" was her response to a student who added the suffix -est to the word /forget/. At this point, the teacher spoke loudly and reminded all the students that words need to make sense. She referred the students to the word examples written on the white erase board.

### **Mrs. Green**

Mrs. Green demonstrated strengths in her ability to assess her students' understanding. The quality of the verbal feedback that Mrs. Green provided to her students was also a strength. Please see Table 18 for more details.

**Table 18. Assessment Skills – Mrs. Green**

<b>Assessment Skills</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Assessment for Understanding	4	3
Quality of Verbal Feedback to Students	3	4

Mrs. Green consistently assessed her second graders for their level of understanding. She asked her class, "I have a question for you. Same sound or same letters? Could it have the same letter pattern?" An African-American male student blurted out the answer. Mrs. Green was observed providing the students with test-taking



strategy reminders. She frequently walked around the classroom, monitoring the students' understanding of her instruction, through individual questioning and whole group verbal checks.

The verbal feedback that Mrs. Green provided her students was positive and encouraging. She was observed telling an African-American male student, "T---, you need to count buddy. I'm looking and waiting." Mrs. Green asked the students another whole group question. An African-American male student answered the question. The teacher responded, "J---, Good job!"

### **Mrs. Blue**

Mrs. Blue was observed assessing her students' understanding during observation one and two. This was an area of strength for her. The quality of verbal feedback provided to students was a strength on the first observation and at an average level during the second observation. Please see Table 19 for more details.

**Table 19. Assessment Skills – Mrs. Blue**

<b>Assessment Skills</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Assessment for Understanding	4	3
Quality of Verbal Feedback to Students	3	2

Mrs. Blue assessed her student's level of understanding. She asked the students to make predictions about their reading story. An African-American male student made an incorrect prediction and she used it as a teachable moment and said, "It's ok to make incorrect predictions." She explained to the class that "predictions are to allow students to get more in to the story." Mrs. Blue monitored student performance in the room by asking students what they were doing or how they were progressing in their assigned center. The quality of verbal feedback to students observed in Mrs. Blue's classroom was average. She explained to a student in the class the meaning of the term, genre, because

the student didn't know what it meant. The majority of the verbal exchanges between Mrs. Blue and her students, focused chiefly focused on redirecting or reprimanding students.

### **Mrs. Purple**

Mrs. Purple was observed assessing the understanding of her students in a masterful manner. She also demonstrated strengths in the verbal feedback that she provides to students. Please see Table 20 for more details.

**Table 20. Assessment Skills – Mrs. Purple**

<b>Assessment Skills</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Assessment for Understanding	4	4
Quality of Verbal Feedback to Students	4	3

### **Mrs. Purple**

Mrs. Purple was observed appropriately modeling fractions and reviewing previous knowledge with her kindergarten students. She monitored the students that were working independently by visually checking over their work. Mrs. Purple verbally reviewed a measurement sheet with this group of students. She walked around the table to assess each student's performance on the worksheet to make sure they understood and had correct measurements in inches on their paper. Mrs. Purple gave students plenty of wait time to answer her questions. A female student was given extended time to write the solution to her math problem on her paper, along with her name, prior to rotating to the next center activity.

The quality of verbal feedback was positive for Mrs. Purple. One student walked over to Mrs. Purple and she said, "Make sure your name is on it; and turn it into your mailbox." She encouraged an African-American male to use more space on his paper

when forming his numbers. She explained during the Math block, that it is possible to get the same answer to different math problems, such as  $2+2=4$  and  $1+3$  also equals four. Mrs. Purple provided praise to students for working so hard. When students had an incorrect answer, she provided additional instruction in a quiet voice, exhibiting respect towards the student. Mrs. Purple's fair and respectful approach allowed her to build positive relationships with her students.

### **Classroom Learning Environment**

#### **Mrs. Red**

Mrs. Red was observed to have effective classroom management strategies. She demonstrated strengths in the management of student behavior and the classroom as a whole. She was also efficient in the organization of the classroom. Please see Table 21 for more details.

**Table 21. Classroom Learning Environment – Mrs. Red**

<b>Classroom Learning Environment</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Classroom Management	3	4
Classroom Organization	3	3

Mrs. Red, as a veteran teacher, it was evident that she was able to successfully manage student behavior and the learning environment in her classroom. Students were observed raising their hands and waiting to be called upon. When a student had difficulty, Mrs. Red provided direct instruction for that student. Students were instructed to return their items back to their storage location at the end of the math block. During this transition time, Mrs. Red counted forwards from one to ten; to give students time to return items and to return to their seats. At the number ten, the students were silent. She then gave additional instruction and added a penny to their "goodness buckets". This

appeared to be a part of the classroom management system. The students seemed to understand the relevance of her adding pennies to the buckets on their tables.

Colorful content posters and an alphabet strip adorned the walls in her classroom. There were six rectangular tables in the classroom, two kidney shaped tables, and numerous small student chairs. The room was organized to allow students to have space to comfortably move around during transitions, along with independent reading and work on the carpet. Mrs. Red often worked with a small group of students at one of the kidney tables during reading and math. Students were seated in groups of four at rectangular tables. There was also a carpeted area where Mrs. Red was able to provide whole group instruction, read aloud books to students, and use to gather students together in one place.

### **Mrs. Orange**

Mrs. Orange demonstrated effective classroom management practices in her classroom. She was also masterful in the organization of the classroom. Please see Table 22 for more details.

**Table 22. Classroom Learning Environment – Mrs. Orange**

<b>Classroom Learning Environment</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Classroom Management	4	4
Classroom Organization	3	3

Mrs. Orange demonstrated effective classroom management practices in her classroom. Her students were well vested in the classroom routines and followed procedures without being told or reminded. When interviewed, Mrs. Orange shared that she “knows when students need that positive loving nudge and when they need a little quick tap to bring them back to reality, and maybe a more stern approach, but it can all be done with love.”

The layout and organization of Mrs. Orange's classroom allowed students to freely move around and have room to work in various spaces outside of their table. The researcher observed Mrs. Orange had the carpet space in the middle of the front part of the classroom adequately giving students a space for whole group instruction. There were centers for painting, building blocks, and at least two empty tables for students to work in groups.

### **Mrs. Yellow**

Classroom management was an area in need of improvement for Mrs. Yellow. She did demonstrate some strengths in the area of classroom organization. Please see Table 23 for more details.

**Table 23. Classroom Learning Environment – Mrs. Yellow**

<b>Classroom Learning Environment</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Classroom Management	2	2
Classroom Organization	3	3

Mrs. Yellow was observed verbally redirecting off-task students by saying, "A--- --, go back to your seat," after about five minutes of their conversation. Mrs. Yellow remarked, "If you are just getting back [from remediation], have a peer explain what to do. Please get busy." The students were then instructed by the teacher to direct their questions to the other students at their table. When Mrs. Yellow had to repeat information numerous times, it resulted in her appearing frustrated and ultimately caused her to raise her voice towards her students. This approach can be perceived as negatively impacting her teacher-student relationships due to students being fearful of loud verbal reprimands from Mrs. Yellow.

## **Mrs. Green**

The classroom management that Mrs. Green displayed in the classroom was orderly, routine-based, and student-focused. She displayed strengths in the area of classroom management and organization. Please see Table 24 for more details.

**Table 24. Classroom Learning Environment – Mrs. Green**

<b>Classroom Learning Environment</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Classroom Management	3	3
Classroom Organization	3	3

The students in her classroom would raise their hand and wait for Mrs. Green to walk to their desk and answer their question. She would answer students' questions with a patient, respectful tone in her voice. Mrs. Green provided her students transition time to prepare for the review of their spelling vocabulary sheets by counting from one to twenty. An African-American male student walked up to the teacher to ask a question. Mrs. Green sent him back to his seat and reminded him to raise his hand instead of just walking up to her. She was observed telling other non-African-American students to raise their hands also when they wanted her attention or help. Several students requested to go to the bathroom. She reminded them of the rules for using the bathroom. Because Mrs. Green had set behavioral expectations that she communicated to students, they knew the rules and were able to comply with them. Teachers that have high expectations for their students often have positive relationships with them too.

Colorful posters adorned the walls in her classroom. A poster that focuses on kindness is not diverse but filled with Caucasian males was hung on the wall near a verb poster that did show student racial diversity. The students sat at desks in groupings of

six. There was a designated carpet area for whole group instruction that Mrs. Green used during the observations.

### **Mrs. Blue**

Classroom management was a strength for Mrs. Blue during the two observations. She also demonstrated strengths in the area of classroom organization. Please see Table 25 for more details.

**Table 25. Classroom Learning Environment – Mrs. Blue**

<b>Classroom Learning Environment</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Classroom Management	4	4
Classroom Organization	3	3

During a reading group, a student commented on Mrs. Blue's reprimand of another group of students for leaving their word study words under her desk, causing Mrs. Blue to remind the student, "H---, who should you be worried about?" Another example of classroom management was demonstrated by Mrs. Blue as she reviewed her expectations for student behavior during the completion of the Famous Person classroom project.

There were no pictures of students on the walls in the class. The posters on the wall were all content related such as: Simple machines (Science), Globe/Map Skills (Social Studies), Clock/Calendar (Math), and Every Day Counts materials (Math). The students' desks were arranged in two horizontal rows where students are facing the white erase board. Mrs. Blue's organization of the classroom allowed students to move freely around the classroom and participate in learning centers.

## **Mrs. Purple**

Mrs. Purple was observed as clearly demonstrating effective classroom management practices. She was also masterful in her classroom observation. Please see Table 26 for more details.

**Table 26. Classroom Learning Environment – Mrs. Purple**

<b>Classroom Learning Environment</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Classroom Management	4	3
Classroom Organization	4	3

Mrs. Purple's classroom was quiet, with only sounds of students working. Most of the students were engaged in the Math activity. The teacher verbally reviewed measurement sheet with one group of students while the others worked independently or with a para-educator. During the interview, Mrs. Purple stated that she, used behavior charts. We have charts set up in our classroom and just reinforcing that, and then rewarding students at the end of the week with stickers, treasure box, anything intrinsic that they can see, you know, or understand that "I know I've done a good week. I've had a good week and I get this."

The classroom is filled with very colorful posters and pictures are on the walls in the classroom. Student work is displayed on the cabinet doors. Two posters located under the student cubbies show diverse students, in a cartoon-style. There were colorful rugs on the floor with the alphabet, world map, and alphabet with pictures. Books are located on tops of cabinets, along the whiteboard ledge, on top of the file cabinets, and on various shelves. The teacher incorporates space well in the classroom as evidenced by



the amount of space between the tables and the amount of open space in the middle of the classroom. Overall, the room is very colorful and visually stimulating.

### **Personal Qualities**

#### **Mrs. Red**

Mrs. Red was masterful in the areas of Caring, Positive Relationships, and Enthusiasm. She also demonstrated strengths in the areas of Fairness and Respect and Encouragement of Responsibility during her observations. Please see Table 27 for more details.

**Table 27. Personal Qualities – Mrs. Red**

<b>Personal Qualities</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Caring	4	4
Fairness and Respect	3	3
Positive Relationships	4	4
Encouragement of Responsibility	3	3
Enthusiasm	4	4

Mrs. Red was a caring teacher towards her kindergarten students. She consistently smiled, infused humor into instruction, and appeared to genuinely care about her students. When Mrs. Red spoke to her students, they responded positively and seemed to be comfortable in close proximity to her. When a student in the small group at the kidney shaped table spilled water from his graduated cylinder, Mrs. Red cleaned up the spilled water with paper towels without any verbal reprimand to the student. She smiled and chuckled as she walked around and monitored student progress.

When Mrs. Red redirected students, she did not do so in a loud voice or demonstrative manner but, restated the academic and behavioral expectations for the lesson and then modeled the appropriate action. The level of fairness and respect that she exhibited towards her students was a factor that contributed to her forging positive

relationships with her students. Throughout the nonstandard measurement lesson, she attempted to spend an equitable amount of time with each student assessing for their understanding.

Forging positive teacher-student relationships was a strength for Mrs. Red. She infused humor in her instruction. An example was she shared a funny story about the funnel being used in the classroom, during the measurement lesson. During the interview, Mrs. Red shared that during Open House, at the beginning of the school year, she often gives the students a stuffed animal. She said, “being a kindergarten teacher there are kids who have never been to school before and some that have but I always like to do the unexpected. A stuffed animal works wonders the first day.”

Mrs. Red encouraged her students to take responsibility for their learning. During the nonstandard measurement student-led activity, she was observed encouraging students to measure various objects and share and compare their findings with their peers and her. Mrs. Red generated enthusiasm in her classroom. Mrs. Red shared in the interview, that when she first meets students at the beginning of the school year, she tells them,

that this is a fun place to be. We are going to do wonderful things and it's not all pencil and paper. I get them excited about coming to school and I give them a little treat so that they say, “My teacher gave me this and I'm going to see her tomorrow,” or “I'm coming back.” Even those that cry, I still give a warm fuzzy out to them.

## **Mrs. Orange**

Mrs. Orange was masterful in her level of Enthusiasm and Fairness and Respect displayed towards her students. She demonstrated strengths in Caring, Positive Relationships, and Encouragement of Responsibility. Please see Table 28 for more details.

**Table 28. Personal Qualities – Mrs. Orange**

<b>Personal Qualities</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Caring	3	4
Fairness and Respect	4	4
Positive Relationships	4	3
Encouragement of Responsibility	3	3
Enthusiasm	4	4

Mrs. Orange demonstrated her ability to relate to her students through her calm tone of voice, smiles, laughter, and verbal praise. Her caring disposition created a sense of closeness with her students leading to positive teacher-student relationships. An example of this closeness is when one African-American male student had difficulty tying his shoe, she stated, “I think Mrs. S----- and I will help you, please don’t make anymore knots, we will help you.”

Mrs. Orange treated her students with fairness and respect. She reprimanded and redirected students with a calm tone and void of sarcasm. Verbal examples she was observed to say “Please don’t start this” “Slow down, there’s nothing to rush to” “Excellent” “I like how C----- is using an uppercase Y”“S----- has /YOUR/ spelled correctly”. She also used the words, “Please and Thank you” whenever she asked the students to do a direct task such as, “Read for us, please.”

During the interview, Mrs. Orange disclosed the details of a positive teacher-student relationship she has forged with an African-American male elementary student in her class. She expressed that the student was aware that his parents and teacher were, working on this for his benefit...Every time that homework journal came back and it was better each month as he came along. Lavishing that praise on him, really letting him see how his work had improved from one month to the next. And letting him take pride in himself and in his work.

Mrs. Orange reminded the students to use counters, chips, and “cookies” to count, or to use the math strategy of “adding up”, thus encouraging them to take control of their learning. Her enthusiasm about addition during Math Talk was reciprocated by the students and they became excited about learning and sharing their ideas about addition. She had such expression and enthusiasm in her voice when speaking to the students. Mrs. Orange encouraged movement of students such as “Hop Like a Frog 1-2-3.” She used intonation (rise and fall) when she read and/or reviewed with her students. It was evident that the teacher enjoyed teaching.

#### **Mrs. Yellow**

Mrs. Yellow demonstrated strengths in the areas of Caring, Fairness and Respect, Positive Relationships, and Enthusiasm during the first observation compared to the second observation. Please see Table 29 for more details.

**Table 29. Personal Qualities – Mrs. Yellow**

<b>Personal Qualities</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Caring	3	2
Fairness and Respect	3	2
Positive Relationships	3	2
Encouragement of Responsibility	2	2
Enthusiasm	3	2

Mrs. Yellow attempts to build positive teacher-student relationships with her students. Mrs. Yellow was observed showing positive feelings towards the students but in an inconsistent manner. Her comments were not laced with sarcasm nor are they truly caring in nature. The lack of consistent positive communication with the students, poses a challenge as Mrs. Yellow attempts to establish teacher-student relationships in the classroom.

Mrs. Yellow encourages her first grade students to make predictions about the story through a picture walk; and gave one student an additional 20 seconds to look through pictures because he was having difficulty producing a prediction for the story. She maintained the majority of the responsibility for students' learning and didn't really encourage students' to take responsibility for their individual learning. Mrs. Yellow showed a positive attitude towards student learning and did not discourage students from learning however, seldom encouraged students to enjoy learning.

### **Mrs. Green**

Mrs. Green demonstrated strengths in the areas of Caring, Fairness and Respect, Positive Relationships, and Enthusiasm. Please see Table 30 for more details.

**Table 30. Personal Qualities – Mrs. Green**

<b>Personal Qualities</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Caring	4	4
Fairness and Respect	4	4
Positive Relationships	4	3
Encouragement of Responsibility	3	3
Enthusiasm	4	3

Mrs. Green was caring, showed fairness and respect towards her students, and formed positive relationships with them. During the interview, she expressed that she feels that,

the child should feel comfortable in coming to a teacher under any circumstance, small or little. What we think might be little to a child might be huge. The comfort level like I said in the classroom, you shouldn't see a child nervous, they should look happy. They should be when they walk through the door they should feel welcome. And I think if you have a child's trust and they know that you care about them and care about their well-being that they are learning...

Mrs. Green consistently smiled at her students. When she had to redirect a student for running in the classroom, she simply reminded him that he needed to slow down when transitioning from space to space. Her caring nature was evidenced when an African-American male student expressed to Mrs. Green that his eye hurt; she recommended that he splash water on it. She then stopped and leaned down to look at his eye. She was very nurturing towards him.

When Mrs. Green was asked about factors that assist in forging positive teacher-student relationships during the interview, she replied,

I tend to share a lot of stories with the kids. And I think the more that they know about Mrs. Green outside of the classroom (laugh) makes me feel or makes them realize that I'm a real person. I have feelings. You know I share about my daughters, my pets, and we just share stories a lot with each other. And I think that helps to build that relationship as well. And I let them know

...that their parents are important to me as well as they are.

In the classroom, Mrs. Green was observed providing an African-American male student with lots of praise. When she redirected this student it was done in a respectful tone. She encouraged students to lean over and assist their peers. Mrs. Green smiled frequently at her students, laughed at their jokes, and she made jokes for the students.

Mrs. Green consistently encouraged her students to take responsibility for their learning, and to keep trying when faced with a challenge through the use of praise and positive feedback. Mrs. Green promoted students to have an enthusiasm for learning in her classroom. Towards the end of the vocabulary review, Mrs. Green asked the students to put one hand on the tops of their heads and one hand on their stomachs. She then directed them to rub their stomachs and pat their heads. Mrs. Green also allowed students to move to different spots in the classroom about every 15 minutes. Her infusion of humor, games, and movement can be perceived as the creation of an atmosphere of comfort in Mrs. Green's classroom. The positive teacher-student relationships that Mrs. Green forged with her students were the result of her use of positive communication, fairness and respect, coupled with her high expectations for the students.

### **Mrs. Blue**

Mrs. Blue demonstrated strengths in the areas of Caring, Fairness and Respect, Encouragement of Responsibility, and Positive Relationships in her classroom. Please see Table 31 for more detail.

**Table 31. Personal Qualities – Mrs. Blue**

<b>Personal Qualities</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Caring	3	3
Fairness and Respect	3	3
Positive Relationships	3	3

Encouragement of Responsibility	3	4
Enthusiasm	3	2

During the interview, Mrs. Blue stated,

I think showing the students that you care. Greeting them every morning, making it a nurturing place. Students who feel like you care about them are more likely to succeed for you and try harder for you. So I try to form relationships with them, maybe go to some of their sporting events outside of school, or talk to them about some of their interests. Just so it's not all school, all the time.

Mrs. Blue was observed speaking to her students with fairness and respect. She consistently used the words, please and thank you, when asking students to answer questions or complete tasks. Mrs. Blue's perception on forming positive relationships with students was stated as,

I try to be more than just like their teacher to them. I try to treat them as if they were my own kids. How I would want my kids to be treated if they were sent to somebody's classroom. If they walk in and they look sad, comforting them. If a kid comes in and they are tired or something has happened, they are not really going to have a successful day, so it's important that they know that you care about their outside needs also. So I just try and talk to them, try to have



fun with them. Even if it's just play at recess w/ them so that they can see you as more than just authority figure.

During the second observation, Mrs. Blue encouraged her students to take responsibility for their learning by providing them some autonomy as they researched for their Famous Person project. The clear models that she provided for her students allowed them to make appropriate choices as they gathered their data. Mrs. Blue was observed using a positive tone with her third grade students. She also smiled at the students occasionally. She attempted to create enthusiasm for the students through her voice inflection as she read parts of the reading passage aloud during whole group instruction. She appeared to be caring towards her students and seemed positive during the delivery of her instruction. Mrs. Blue's use of positive communication, high expectations, and fair and respectful delivery of redirection are key factors in her positive teacher-student relationships.

### **Mrs. Purple**

Mrs. Purple demonstrated mastery in the areas of Caring and Positive Relationships. She also demonstrated strengths in the areas of Fairness and Respect, Encouragement of Responsibility, and Enthusiasm. Please see Table 32 for more detail.

**Table 32. Personal Qualities – Mrs. Purple**

<b>Personal Qualities</b>	<b>Observation 1 Rating</b>	<b>Observation 2 Rating</b>
Caring	4	4
Fairness and Respect	3	3
Positive Relationships	4	3
Encouragement of Responsibility	3	3
Enthusiasm	3	3

Mrs. Purple was caring and was observed praising her students for their work completion and the successful management of their behavior in the classroom. Mrs. Purple projected a quiet and calm voice when speaking to the students. She provided her students with praise not only about present performance and behavior, but also about past behavior and performance in a previous center, during center rotation. Mrs. Purple demonstrated fairness and respect towards her students. She rated a level three in this subcategory, Fairness and Respect, on the Teacher Effectiveness Scale. As Mrs. Purple interacted with an African-American male in her math center, she provided respectful redirection as he attempted to write his math equations. Regardless of the quantity of questions that her students asked her, her tone and word choice remained calm and even, void of sarcasm or annoyance. She gave students plenty of wait time to answer her questions.

Building positive relationships is a strength for Mrs. Purple. During the interview, Mrs. Purple expressed her perspective about strategies used to form positive teacher-student relationships,

I think that students should have chances. If I make a mistake today then I should have a chance to prove that I can do better tomorrow. So I've started using the reward you know where I just do it day by day. So tomorrow, if Monday you change your person, and then on Tuesday you can have a fresh start. And I think it's just rewarding them and letting them know that they are great students and we

all make mistakes, and you can learn from your mistakes  
and do better.

Mrs. Purple encouraged the kindergarten students to take responsibility for their actions, academically and behaviorally, as they worked in differentiated math centers. She demonstrated her enthusiasm about teaching through her consistent demonstration of care towards the students and their outcomes. Mrs. Purple has forged positive relationships with her students through her praise, caring manner, and use of positive communication and feedback.

### **Conclusion**

The teacher practices exhibited by the six research study participants influence the formation of positive teacher-student relationships in the elementary classroom setting. Instructional and assessment practices, the classroom learning environment, and personal qualities teachers possess and demonstrate create an environment in schools that allow students to have positive relationships with their teachers, a contributing factor towards students' academic success or failure.

## **Chapter 5: Summary of Findings, Implications, Future Research Suggestions, and Conclusion**

Pianta and colleagues have created a research base, over the past decade, that demonstrates that positive teacher-student relationships are an integral facet to students' thriving in the school environment and ultimately being successful (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta, 1999). The quality of children's relationships with their teachers in the early grades has important implications for children's concurrent and future academic and behavioral adjustment (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). This research suggests that teacher-student relationships can have a positive or negative impact on students depending on the quality of the relationship. In fact, the source of most students' discontentment with school is related to the disliking of their teacher (Cornelius-White, 2007).

African-American males are a population of students that are considered at-risk for academic failure nation-wide. Previous studies have shown that positive teacher-student relationships positively impact students at academic risk for referral to special education or retention; therefore, despite predictions that these students would fail, these students were ultimately promoted and not referred to special education because of their positive relationships with their teachers. (Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995; Hamre & Pianta, 2006, p.49). This need for developing positive teacher-student relationships influences not only academic achievement but also self-esteem and identity for African-American male elementary students. This study sought to highlight specific practices that elementary teachers are using to foster positive relationships with their African-American

male students. Teachers play a pivotal role through their impact on the academic and social behaviors of minority students but are too often, predisposed to internalizing and projecting the negative stereotypes and myths that are unfairly used to describe these students as hopeless and unsuccessful (Garibaldi, 1992). The belief that education is important and valued may not be held for all African-American male students, so through teacher encouragement the trajectory towards academic failure may be altered and students can internalize the dream of academic success (Garibaldi, 1992).

The observational data and individual interview data gathered during this research study addressed the dispositions exhibited by teachers in creating positive teacher-student relationships in the elementary classroom setting. The research participants perceived that they forged positive relationships with their African-American elementary male students through the use of the following elements: provision of additional instructional support and care, praise and positive communication, and setting high expectations. These dispositions help to create a positive environment for student learning in their classrooms.

### **Summary of Findings**

The research findings extend the current literature on teacher-student relationships by suggesting the effects of these relationships on student's academic achievement. It can be perceived that students who enjoy school are more successful compared to their counterparts who do not enjoy school at all (Cornelius-White, 2007). When African-American male students are able to have a positive relationship with their teachers, the teachers become another resource that will encourage the male students to put forth effort and be successful in schools.

**Perceptions of dispositions needed to create successful teacher-student relationships.** Praise was used by the participants in this research study as positive verbal feedback for correct responses, tools of encouragement, and as positive classroom management strategies. This research study extended Marseille's 2009 findings that teachers who cultivate an environment that is nurturing, supportive, and filled with praise in fact, create a learning environment that motivates students to achieve. When elementary students experience a teacher, such as Mrs. Purple, that uses verbal praise and verbal feedback, they are motivated and inspired to be successful. The use of praise by elementary teachers, as seen in this research study with five of the participants, encouraged their students to push themselves to achieve.

All six of the research participants perceived that having high expectations is a disposition needed to create successful teacher-student relationships. The theme of high expectations from this research study is also consistent with Wimberly's (2002) findings that indicated there is a positive relationship between teachers' expectations and student achievement. Additionally, Milner (2009) stated that "caring teachers cannot adopt approaches that do not push their students – high expectations are necessary to help the students emancipate themselves and to move beyond their current situations" (p. 13).

**Perceptions of dispositions needed to forge positive teacher-student relationships with African-American elementary male students.** Five of the research study participants perceived the provision of additional instructional support and care as a disposition needed for forging positive teacher-student relationships with African-American elementary male students. Classroom support can potentially assist in closing racial and economic achievement gaps; yet, too often disadvantaged students are placed

in classrooms with little classroom support (Hamre & Pianta, 2006). Research has shown that low-achieving teens felt little or no connection to their school or teachers, and that no one cared about their school performance. These students suggested that this lack of connection and caring did not encourage them to continue and they gave up on schoolwork and homework (Black, 2006). Similarly, in the current study, Mrs. Red suggested that African-American elementary male students require additional support and care. This additional support was defined by the classroom observations and individual interviews as instructional remediation efforts and emotional support by demonstrating a willingness to spend time talking and listening to students about their feelings, from the teacher.

Two of the six research participants perceived that the use of praise and positive communication is needed when forming positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students. The praise provided to certain African-American male elementary kindergarten students by Mrs. Orange, was used as a positive classroom management strategy. Her praise affirmed that the African-American male students were giving correct responses and were making academic strides. In lieu, of drawing attention to students' off-task behavior and inappropriate actions, the teacher with the positive teacher-student relationship directs attention to the on-task, appropriate student behavior, by praising the student who has met the teachers' expectations.

Two of the six research participants perceived that having high expectations for African-American male students is necessary for creating a positive teacher-student relationship. Mrs. Orange's high expectations for an African-American male student resulted in a Galatea self-fulfilling effect, where her words actually became reality for

this student. It can be perceived that teachers' expectations for African-American male students manifest in their interactions with the student, impacting student's academic success or failure.

The necessity of having high expectations was also perceived by the research study participants as a disposition that assists in the forging of positive teacher-student relationships with African-American elementary male students. Mrs. Orange, a research participant, used her high expectations to inspire and create a self-fulfilling prophecy for an African-American male kindergartener in her classroom, catapulting him into consistent academic achievement in language arts. Rubie-Davies, Hattie & Hamilton (2006) cited that properties of self-fulfilling Galatea effects are desirable, have positive effects, and result of high teacher expectations that enhance student academic achievement. Teachers that have high expectations for their elementary African-American male students are able to form positive relationships with them, thus impacting their academic performance. This research finding supports Stronge's (2007) study that posited students of teachers who encourage them to succeed tend to put forth more academic effort compared to their counterparts whose teachers are not encouraging.

**Practices that support positive teacher-student relationships.** There are a number of practices that the research participants, teachers that have positive teacher-student relationships, displayed in their classrooms that support teacher-student relationships. Instructional practices such as differentiating instruction for students along with maintaining and communicating a focus on instruction in the classroom setting. These participants also provided their students with instructional clarity and complexity and held high expectations for them in the classroom. However, the use of technology



was not a practice that was perceived as evident in fostering positive teacher-student relationships.

Assessment practices also were demonstrated by the research study participants that included consistent assessment of students for understanding and providing high quality verbal feedback to students regarding their academic and behavioral performance. The classroom learning environment was reflective of consistent classroom management practices and a strategically organized classroom setting. Practices such as demonstrating care, showing students fairness and respect, encouraging students to take responsibility for their work and actions, and being enthusiastic support the creation of positive teacher-student relationships.

### **Implications for Teachers**

Teachers that form positive relationships with their students utilize a variety of strategies as highlighted in this research study. Having high expectations and speaking self-fulfilling prophecies, words spoken with the intent of making them a reality in the future, over students only occurs when teachers have a positive vision for their African-American students. Mrs. Red, a research participant, emphasized the importance of having academic and behavioral goals for students. Teachers must be able to envision the academic success of their African-American elementary male students regardless of the hurdles that must be faced. Kafele (2009) stated that teachers must “be able to envision them performing exceptionally in [their] classroom, completing all of their homework assignments, and scoring high on tests and standardized assessments” (p. 32). To accomplish this, teachers must see the need for and understand how to differentiate

instruction (Kafele, 2009). Differentiation of instruction is designed to support learners with different needs because one instructional or behavioral strategy may not meet the needs of all students.

African-American male students, according to the findings from this research study, have a need for additional attention and care in the classroom however, the needs for this population of students may be unique but teachers should still have high expectations for African-American male students. Teachers interact differently with low-achieving students compared to high-achieving students, through the level and quantity of praise and approval provided (McEwan, 2003). That is, teachers that have low expectations of their students typically have poor teacher-student relationships. As educators, we have to recognize that having low expectations for African-American male students has long-term effects. The effects of teacher expectations may be categorized as self-fulfilling prophecy effects on student achievement (Rubie-Davies, Hattie & Hamilton, 2006). Students can discern when their teachers have faith in their abilities and their potential, and when teachers believe that they will fail and be unsuccessful. Therefore, teachers must have high expectations for all of their students regardless of their academic level to promote academic achievement.

All of the teachers in the current study discussed the importance of supporting and connecting with children in their classrooms and recognized that students' needs vary. Five of the six teachers mentioned the importance of purposefully and intentionally forming a positive relationship with their AA male students. However, one teacher suggested that connection was important for all students and that she treats all students the same. Mrs. Orange shared, "Communication is unique and essential for all of your

students...but I will say there are times when I have found that communication isn't as easy...that can happen regardless of race, I don't know if that subgroup makes anything be unique. When asked about the uniqueness of her relationships with African-American male students, Mrs. Green said, "they look like relationships with everybody. I mean they are no different. Every child in my room, I feel like I try to treat the same. The color of their skin makes no difference." This is similar to the concept of color blindness as some teacher did not perceive they needed to do anything unique to forge positive teacher-student relationships with African-American elementary male students in their classrooms.

Color blindness refers to the avoidance or lack of acknowledgement that a student's race, typically seen in the color of their skin, creates a need that would cause a student to be different and require differentiation on any level, in the classroom setting. Although students may all be treated with fairness and respect, ignoring a student's ethnicity and culture disaffirms their existence (Delpit, 1995). Teachers may feel that instructional practices in the classroom should be culturally neutral; a philosophy held among numerous school reformers, that culture and ethnic diversity has no place in the instructional practices delivered in the classroom. However, when teachers blot out the student diversity in their classrooms, they sacrifice opportunities for non-minority students, and themselves, to gain knowledge about other cultures and ethnic groups. There is considerable evidence that supports the importance of race and cultural acknowledgement in the education of African-American male students (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Delpit, 1995).

This color-blind philosophy is linked to educators' uncomfortableness in

discussing race, their lack of knowledge of cultural heritage of their students' peers, and their fears and anxieties that open consideration of differences might incite racial discord or perhaps upset a fragile, often unpredictable, racial harmony (Irvine, 1990, p.26).

Teachers would benefit from professional development in their buildings on culture and ethnic diversity but to gain this knowledge, teachers may have to do some research independent of the professional development offered in their schools. Teachers should be trained so that they will be comfortable with the concept that differentiation based on race and culture in the classroom, to meet students' unique instructional and behavioral needs, is acceptable.

### **Implications for Administrators**

Administrators can support young African-American males and their teachers by ensuring access to professional development that addresses how to deliver effective instructional practices. Through more knowledge on how to effectively deliver instructional practices such as verbal praise, high expectations, and the creation of a caring and supportive learning environment for students, teachers would be better equipped to foster these student-curriculum connections, yielding more opportunities for positive teacher-student relationships. This professional development should feature role play opportunities along with video clips that show students' paralinguistic response(i.e., (response using non-verbal language such as body language, stance, tone of voice, etc.)), especially African-American male students, to verbal praise provided by teachers compared to when negative and bashing statements are used towards students.

Administrators need to facilitate in-depth discussion with their staff about the effects of

having high and low expectations for students academically. Also, it is important that administrators ensure that the staff has shared meaning about appropriate expectations for the student body, to include African-American male students.

There is a need for administrators to serve as positive models to teachers in their buildings by having positive relationships with their staff. It is also wise for administrators to model appropriate methods or strategies that they expect their staff to use in the classroom such as praise, having high expectations, and providing additional support when needed. When administrators use positive communication and verbal feedback, fairness and respect, coupled with a caring disposition, in their interactions with teachers, it may have a positive impact on the school's climate. Over time, the school climate may become more trusting between administrators and teachers, and between teachers and students.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

There are a few extensions to this research that may be worthy of future exploration.

1. This research study was conducted with a sample of only six research participants, two of which were African-American, in a school district that does not have large populations of African-American male students. Therefore, conducting a similar research study with a larger sample of participants in a more diverse school division may provide a wider variety of research results and practices that positively impact teacher-student relationships with African-American male students.
2. The participants in this body of work were all elementary teachers. It may be beneficial to conduct a similar study with secondary teachers and then do a cross-level

comparison between elementary, middle, and high school teachers on practices that create positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male students.

3. All of the research participants mentioned the impact of praise on their African-American male students hence, a study that investigated the various types of praise statements used in classrooms and the impact that they had on this targeted population of students would be worthwhile to pursue.

4. Future research that tracked and monitored teachers' expectations for African-American male students compared to that cohort of students' academic achievement would be beneficial as it would expand the body of research for this topic in the field of education.

5. Lastly, African-American male students are under-represented in the body of educational research. Therefore, studies that address practices best suited for the unique needs of African-American male students in a classroom setting are needed.

## **Conclusion**

This research study was focused on teacher practices that create positive teacher-student relationships with African-American elementary male students. Pianta's work on relationships between teachers and students provided a conceptual framework for this specific study. A review of the literature on this topic evidenced practices that positively and negatively impact teacher-student relationships. Through classroom observations and interviews, the perceptions of elementary teachers were examined on how they actually create teacher-student relationships with their African-American male students. These perceptions were insightful and often supported in the research literature. Effective teachers understand the need for praise, having high expectations, and provision

of additional care and understanding for African-American male students. Although there is still a need for additional research to further explore teacher practices and the creation of positive teacher-student relationships in schools, there is assurance in the existence of teachers that implement practices that create a positive difference in the lives of African-American male students.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Protocol**

- 1) What do you feel defines a positive teacher-student relationships?
- 2) What do positive teacher-student relationships look like in your classroom?
- 3) Describe the positive teacher-student relationships that you have with the African-American elementary male students in your classroom.
- 4) What is your perception of what has made these teacher-student relationships positive with the African-American elementary male students in your classroom?
- 5) What factors do you feel are unique to forging successful teacher-student relationships with your African-American elementary male students?
- 6) How are your relationships with the African-American male elementary students in your class unique compared to your relationships with other students?
- 7) Have you ever been unsuccessful in forming a positive relationship with an African-American male elementary student? What happened? Why do you perceive it was unsuccessful?
- 8) (Follow-up question to observations) When I observed your classroom on \_\_\_\_\_, I saw \_\_\_\_\_ occurring, will you please tell me more about what the students were working on in the classroom.

**Appendix B**  
**Anecdotal Observation Field Notes**

**Mrs. Red 4/25/2012      Observation #1    10:06-10:53    47 minutes**  
**Kindergarten**

K---- & M----- were AA male students

Students were given time at the beginning of the lesson to roam room to allow movement and measure using nonstandard items.

Teacher shares positive, funny story about the funnel being used in the classroom.

Teacher checks students' knowledge by asking where the measuring cups are found, where can types of liquids be found or can be used in measuring cups and spoons.

Teacher shows students various measurement equipment

Teacher regularly checked on whole group about every four minutes while working with a small group of students at the back kidney table, measuring colored water in graduated cylinders

"Yes" – teacher provided positive feedback to Keith

Students clearly understood that they couldn't throw objects in the classroom. Teacher redirected student with dice on how to properly roll the dice.

Students regularly raised their hands

AA male students each sat at a rectangular table.

There were six rectangular tables in the classroom, 2 kidney shaped tables, small student chairs

Teacher was in close proximity to all students

"Excellent" – praise to K--- (AA Male)

A Caucasian male student began to throw the dice across the room. Teacher quietly redirected the student and showed the child how to correctly roll the dice on the floor. AA female was not measuring properly w/ unifix cube tower, so the teacher showed her how to break off blocks for measurement using the unifix cubes. Teacher took about 2.5 minutes to explain to a Caucasian male student how to properly measure with the nonstandard items.

When a child in the small group at the kidney shaped table, spilled water from his graduated cylinder, the teacher cleaned up the spilled water with paper towels without any verbal reprimand to the student.

Teacher gave each student at least 1-2 minutes of individual attention to assess their understanding of the task of measuring with nonstandard items.

Students independently measure around room using nonstandard items. M----- (AA Male) was in the last small group called to the back kidney shaped table. K----- (AA Male) was called in the first group.

Teacher was enthusiastic about the nonstandard measurement unit. She referenced prior knowledge when working with food color and manipulatives in the past.

Great deal of student movement in the class. K---- (AA Male) and a Caucasian male student left the room for Reading remediation during the first three minutes of this observation. I observed

100% student engagement. Students shared measurement findings with their peers and the teacher.

The teacher was smiling and chuckling as she walked around and monitored student progress.

Students were instructed to return their items back to their storage location.

During this transition time, the teacher counted forwards from one to ten, to give students time to return items and to return to their seats. At the number ten, the students were silent.

The teacher then gave additional instruction and added a penny to their "goodness buckets".

This appeared to be a part of the classroom management system. The students seemed to understand the relevance of her adding pennies to the buckets on their tables.

"This bucket is full over here"

"Thank you Babe"

"Here Baby, put them here..."

"Darling...thank you for...."

"Thank you M----- (AA Male), C----- (Caucasian female), and A----- (Caucasian female) for ...."

## Appendix C

### Student-Teacher Relationship Scale – Short Form

Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please reflect on the degree to which each of the following statements currently applies to your relationship with this child. Using the scale below, circle the appropriate number for each item.*

Definitely does not apply	Not really	Neutral, not sure	Applies somewhat	Definitely applies
1	2	3	4	5

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. If upset, this child will seek comfort from me.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. This child is uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. This child values his/her relationship with me.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. When I praise this child, he/she beams with pride.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. This child spontaneously shares information about himself/herself.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. This child easily becomes angry with me.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. It is easy to be in tune with what this child is feeling.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. This child remains angry or is resistant after being disciplined.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Dealing with this child drains my energy  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. When this child is in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. This child's feelings toward me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. This child is sneaky or manipulative with me.                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. This child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

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**Appendix D**  
**Teacher Effectiveness Scale**  
**Summary Rating Form**

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade/Subject Observed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Beginning Time \_\_\_\_\_ Ending Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Observation Total Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Make notes as needed across all teacher effectiveness categories as they are observed throughout the observation period. Once the observation period has been completed, score each individual category as soon as possible using the rubric for each item: Level 4 = most effective, Level 1 = least effective. Do not average the scores across all categories. Each category on the *Scale* should be scored on the level that best describes the teacher's demonstrated behavior during the observation period on that particular category. When the observed behavior in a given teacher effectiveness category crosses more than one level on the scoring rubric, score the item in the category in which the preponderance of evidence falls. For example, if some of the observed evidence for *I-1, Instructional Differentiation*, is reflected in Level 4, some in Level 2, but the majority/plurality of evidence is in Level 3, then the teacher would be scored in Level 3 for *Instructional Skills*.

### SUMMARY SCORES

#### INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS

#### ASSESSMENT SKILLS

Item	Score		Item	Score
I-1 Instructional Differentiation			A-1 Assessment for Understanding	
I-2 Instructional Focus on Learning			A-2 Quality of Verbal Feedback to Students	
I-3 Instructional Clarity				
I-4 Instructional Complexity				
I-5 Expectations for Student Learning				
I-6 Use of Technology				

#### CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

#### PERSONAL QUALITIES

Item	Score		Item	Score
M-1 Classroom Management			P-1 Caring	
M-2 Classroom Organization			P-2 Fairness & Respect	

		P-3 Positive Relationships
		P-4 Encouragement of Responsibility
		P-5 Enthusiasm

## Area I: Instructional Skills

Effective teachers organize for instruction by maintaining and communicating a focus on instruction, demonstrating high expectations for students, allocating time, and engaging in effective planning. Responsive instruction hinges on a flexibility and facility with a variety of teaching strategies. Teachers who successfully employ a range of strategies reach more students because they tap into more learning styles and student interests.

Title and #	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
<b>I-1</b>  Instructional Differentiation	The teacher uses a broad repertoire of instructional strategies with fluency and flexibility to differentiate instruction for individual or groups of students constantly.	The teacher uses an adequate variety of instructional strategies that appeal to the interests/needs of individual students with multiple approaches to teaching.	The teacher uses a limited number of instructional strategies to meet the individual needs of some students, but the majority target the whole class.	The teacher relies heavily on instructional strategies primarily for the whole class (i.e., lecture, worksheets, questioning, etc.) with little, if any, individualization.
<b>I-1 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b>       				
<b>I-2</b>  Instructional Focus on Learning	The teacher allocates maximum time towards instructional activities resulting in minimal interruptions; academic learning time is clearly the focus of instruction	The teacher reinforces his/her focus on instruction through appropriate allocation of time to the teaching and learning process.	The teacher allows non-instructional activities to reduce instructional time and curtail teaching objectives.	The teacher demonstrates little urgency in making use of instructional time and prolongs interruptions.

<b>I-2 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b>				
<b>I-3</b>  <b>Instructional Clarity</b>	The teacher communicates effectively with individual students and classroom groups. Provides plentiful instructional examples and guided practice.	The teacher communicates with clarity and gives step-by-step directions. Provides some examples and practice.	The teacher does not consistently communicate with clarity or often does not provide adequate directions, examples, or practice.	The teacher provides confusing directions, examples, or practice.  The teacher does not fully or clearly explain concepts.
<b>I-3 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b>				

## Area I: Instructional Skills (continued)

Title and #	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
<b>I-4</b>  <b>Instructional Complexity</b>	Learning activities require complex thinking as a major focus or extension of the lesson(e.g., students may be asked to analyze cause and effect, identify a problem and pose reasonable solutions, speculate giving details or justification, defend options or argue a position with evidence to a great extent).	<i>Some activities require complex thinking as a secondary focus of the lesson.</i>	Learning activities primarily involve students in tasks that require rote memory or only limited amounts of complex thinking. (e.g., students may be asked to summarize straightforward information, infer simple main ideas).	Learning activities involve students in tasks that do not require any significant degree of complex thinking. Students may be asked to recall basic information.
<b>I-4 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b>				
<b>I-5</b>  Expectations For Student Learning	<i>The teacher consistently encourages maximum effort from students and provides the encouragement to promote it; stresses student responsibility.</i>	The teacher encourages consistent effort from students and provides encouragement to promote it.	The teacher sets uneven (different) expectations for students without a clear rationale for the differentiation; does not adequately empower students to assume	The teacher sets low expectations for most or all students; is not surprised with low performance and demonstrates practice that

			responsibility for learning.	students are not capable of independent learning.
<b>I- 5 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b>				
<b>I-6</b>  <b>Use of Technology</b>	The evidence indicates that the teacher consistently and effectively integrates available technology and other resources into meaningful and coherent lessons. The teacher creates tasks to further student expertise.	The teacher consistently uses available technology and other resources, when appropriate to objectives	The teacher uses available technology and/or other resources inappropriately or on a limited basis.	The teacher uses little or none of the available technology and/or other resources in instruction.
<b>I-6 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b>				

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## Area A: Assessment Skills

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*Effective teachers use a variety of assessment practices to monitor student learning, including formal and informal assessments and formative and summative assessments. Assessments are used to monitor progress, provide feedback to students and parents, and to adjust instruction. When necessary, effective teachers re-teach material that has not been learned thoroughly.*

Title and #	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
<b>A-1</b>  <b>Assessment for Understanding</b>	The teacher regularly checks in with students to monitor their level of understanding, interest, frustration, etc. Student understanding is assessed through a variety of methods (observation, group questioning, individual conversations, looking at student work, etc.). The teacher remains flexible in instructional decision-making and seems to continuously use "data" to adjust instruction.	The teacher checks in with students periodically, particularly at the end of the lesson to gauge their understanding of content. The methods and extent of checks for understanding are sufficient to identify and address serious misunderstandings but the probing is not detailed and extensive. The teacher may spend additional time questioning individuals.	The teacher may check for understanding once or twice during a lesson by asking for any questions but does very little probing or acting on the information and makes few adjustments to respond to any confusion students express. The teacher seems to either miss student cues that indicate lack of understanding or recognize them but not act on them. Questions are asked to whole class, not individuals.	The teacher seldom or never checks for understanding and seems to teach the lesson as planned with little flexibility for responding to misunderstandings. The teacher does not use observation or questioning or other assessment methods to monitor student understanding.
<b>A-1 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b>				
<b>A-2</b>  <b>Quality of Verbal Feedback to Students</b>	The teacher provides <i>verbal</i> feedback consistently, addresses individual student strength and weaknesses, and encourages student self-reflection. Feedback is fair and demonstrates high expectations for all students by	The teacher provides <i>verbal</i> feedback that is appropriate and consistently addresses individual student strengths and weaknesses. Feedback provides good idea of how students can improve. The teacher spends	The teacher provides minimal <i>verbal</i> feedback on student performance. Feedback does not adequately address individual student strengths or weaknesses. Re-direction is inconsistent or limited to only a	The teacher provides <i>verbal</i> feedback that is limited to correctness of response ("Good answer.") There is little or no direction provided for improvement in performance. If a student



	encouraging all students to ask questions or contribute to the discussion.	additional time in explanation or probing questions before moving on if there is confusion.	small number of students.	answers incorrectly, the teacher moves on to another student without discussion.
<b>A-2 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b>				

## Area M: Classroom Learning Environment

*The effective teacher creates an overall classroom environment conducive to learning with skills in organization and classroom management. He/She is consistent in their behavioral expectations and responses, and attends to these elements in a proactive way to establish a positive classroom climate oriented toward learning.*

Title and #	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
<b>M-1</b>  <b>Classroom Management</b>	The teacher uses effective organizational strategies to maintain momentum and variety. Uses preventive management strategies. Students appear to know procedures without being reminded.	The teacher responds to inattention and redirects students. Anticipates and resolves minor inattention without disruption to overall lesson. (May include walking over to student and standing close by.)	The teacher uses primarily reactive management strategies (names on the board, calling students down, etc.). Attempts to intervene met with limited success. Students may continue in disruption.	The teacher reacts to or ignores disciplinary incidents rather than trying to prevent them. Disruptions escalate with minimal intervention by teacher.
<b>M-1 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b>				
<b>M-2</b>	The teacher incorporates tasks, materials, and space so effectively into ongoing	<i>The teacher organizes tasks, materials, and space to facilitate learning by students by arranging the room and</i>	The teacher is inconsistent in his/her organization of tasks, materials, and space such that	The teacher demonstrates little organization of tasks, materials, and space such that

<b>Classroom Organization</b>	classroom procedures and expectations for students that they seem to know automatically what to do at certain times during the lessons without being told. The arrangement of the room and materials may change from lesson to lesson to support on-going instruction. Transitions, if any, are smooth.	<i>materials to support the lesson. Any movement of students, materials, equipment, etc., occurs with a purpose and supports the lesson.</i>	once or twice the lesson was interrupted by unnecessary movement or searching for materials.	instructional time is wasted. The room/materials are not set up to accommodate students and the lesson.
<b>M-2 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE (describe the room setup)</b>				

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**Area P: Personal Qualities**

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A teacher's ability to relate with students and to make positive, caring connections with them plays a significant part in supporting the learning environment and student achievement. Effective teachers care about their students and demonstrate that caring so that students are conscious of it.

Title and #	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
<b>P-1</b> <b>Caring</b>	The teacher demonstrates sustained caring and commitment toward each individual student.	The teacher generally demonstrates a caring manner.	The teacher inconsistently demonstrates a caring manner with students. Treats some students with less concern than others.	The teacher is uncaring and distant with students. Demonstrates little concern for some students.
<b>P-1 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b>				

<b>P-2</b>  <b>Fairness and Respect</b>	The teacher consistently demonstrates fairness and respect toward students and actively promotes these qualities in students.	The teacher treats all students with fairness and respect by providing opportunities to participate and succeed.	The teacher treats some students with less respect than others. Limits some students' opportunities for involvement and success.	The teacher shows a lack of respect for students and treats students in an unfair manner.
<b>P-2 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b>				

## Area P: Personal Qualities (continued)

<p><b>P-3</b></p> <p><b>Positive Relationships</b></p>	<p>The teacher consistently models and nurtures supportive relationships among students. Initiates activities to make school an enjoyable experience.</p>	<p>The teacher interacts with students in a friendly and personable manner. Participates in activities to make school an enjoyable experience.</p>	<p>The teacher inconsistently responds to students, not always showing interest in students as individuals.</p>	<p>The teacher does not demonstrate a friendly and personable manner toward students either as a group or individuals.</p>
<p><b>P-3 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b></p>				
<p><b>P-4</b></p> <p><b>Encouragement of Responsibility</b></p>	<p>The teacher actively encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning in ways that communicate high regard and high expectations.</p>	<p>The teacher promotes enthusiasm for learning and encourages students to be active participants in their learning.</p>	<p>The teacher assumes primary responsibility for students' learning and shows limited evidence of trusting students with their learning.</p>	<p>The teacher maintains sole responsibility for student learning and discourages independent thinking by students.</p>
<p><b>P-4 SCORE: _____ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b></p>				

<p><b>P-5</b></p> <p><b>Enthusiasm</b></p>	<p>The teacher is enthusiastic and demonstrates a passion for teaching that is evident in the care with which instruction is prepared and presented; promotes students' enjoyment of learning</p>	<p>The teacher demonstrates a positive attitude about life and teaching; demonstrates care about student outcomes</p>	<p>The teacher shows positive feelings toward student learning in inconsistent ways; seldom encourages students' enjoyment of learning</p>	<p>The teacher rarely, if ever, shows positive feelings toward instruction or student learning; overtly discourages student enjoyment of learning</p>
<p><b>P-5 SCORE: _____</b></p> <p><b>NOTES/RATIONALE:</b></p>				

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**Appendix E**  
**Completed Teacher Effectiveness Scale – Mrs. Red**

**Teacher Effectiveness Scale**  
**Summary Rating Form**

Observer: K. Yeldell

Teacher: Red

School: TES

Grade/Subject Observed: Kindergarten/Math

Date: 4/25/12 Beginning Time 10:06 a.m. Ending Time: 10:53 a.m. Observation Total Time: 47 minutes

**Directions:** Make notes as needed across all teacher effectiveness categories as they are observed throughout the observation period. Once the observation period has been completed, score each individual category as soon as possible using the rubric for each item: Level 4 = most effective, Level 1 = least effective. Do not average the scores across all categories. Each category on the *Scale* should be scored on the level that best describes the teacher's demonstrated behavior during the observation period on that particular category. When the observed behavior in a given teacher effectiveness category crosses more than one level on the scoring rubric, score the item in the category in which the preponderance of evidence falls. For example, if some of the observed evidence for *I-1, Instructional Differentiation*, is reflected in Level 4, some in Level 2, but the majority/plurality of evidence is in Level 3, then the teacher would be scored in Level 3 for *Instructional Skills*.



### SUMMARY SCORES

#### INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS

#### ASSESSMENT SKILLS

Item	Score		Item	Score
I-1 Instructional Differentiation	3		A-1 Assessment for Understanding	4
I-2 Instructional Focus on Learning	3		A-2 Quality of Verbal Feedback to Students	3
I-3 Instructional Clarity	4			
I-4 Instructional Complexity	4			
I-5 Expectations for Student Learning	3			
I-6 Use of Technology	1			

#### CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

#### PERSONAL QUALITIES

Item	Score		Item	Score
M-1 Classroom Management	3		P-1 Caring	4
M-2 Classroom Organization	3		P-2 Fairness & Respect	3
			P-3 Positive Relationships	4
			P-4 Encouragement of Responsibility	3



P-5 Enthusiasm

4

## Area I: Instructional Skills

Effective teachers organize for instruction by maintaining and communicating a focus on instruction, demonstrating high expectations for students, allocating time, and engaging in effective planning. Responsive instruction hinges on a flexibility and facility with a variety of teaching strategies. Teachers who successfully employ a range of strategies reach more students because they tap into more learning styles and student interests.

Title and #	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
<b>I-1</b>  Instructional Differentiation	The teacher uses a broad repertoire of instructional strategies with fluency and flexibility to differentiate instruction for individual or groups of students constantly.	<b>The teacher uses an adequate variety of instructional strategies that appeal to the interests/needs of individual students with multiple approaches to teaching.</b>	The teacher uses a limited number of instructional strategies to meet the individual needs of some students, but the majority target the whole class.	The teacher relies heavily on instructional strategies primarily for the whole class (i.e., lecture, worksheets, questioning, etc.) with little, if any, individualization.
<b>I-1 SCORE: <u>  3  </u>      NOTES/RATIONALE:</b> Students were given time at the beginning of the lesson to roam room to allow movement and measure using nonstandard items. Teacher shares positive, funny story about the funnel being used in the classroom. Teacher shows students various measurement equipment. Teacher regularly checked on whole group about every four minutes while working with a small group of students at the back kidney table, measuring colored water in graduated cylinders. Teacher took about 2.5 minutes to explain to a Caucasian male student how to properly measure with the nonstandard items. She referenced prior knowledge when working with food color and manipulatives in the past. Teacher gave each student at least 1-2 minutes of individual attention to assess their understanding of the task of measuring with nonstandard items. Students independently measure around room using nonstandard items. Students shared measurement findings with their peers and the teacher.				
<b>I-2</b>  Instructional Focus on Learning	The teacher allocates maximum time towards instructional activities resulting in minimal interruptions; academic learning time is clearly the focus of	<b>The teacher reinforces his/her focus on instruction through appropriate allocation of time to the teaching and learning process.</b>	The teacher allows non-instructional activities to reduce instructional time and curtail teaching objectives.	The teacher demonstrates little urgency in making use of instructional time and prolongs interruptions.

	instruction			
<b>I-2 SCORE: __3__</b> <b>NOTES/RATIONALE:</b> Students were given time at the beginning of the lesson to roam the room to allow movement and measure using nonstandard items. Teacher checks students' knowledge by asking where the measuring cups are found, where can types of liquids be found or can be used in measuring cups and spoons. Teacher shows students various measurement equipment Teacher regularly checked on whole group about every four minutes while working with a small group of students at the back kidney table, measuring colored water in graduated cylinders. Great deal of student movement in the class. A Caucasian male student began to throw the dice across the room. Teacher quietly redirected the student and showed the child how to correctly roll the dice on the floor. AA female was not measuring properly w/ unifix cube tower, so the teacher showed her how to break off blocks for measurement using the unifix cubes. Teacher took about 2.5 minutes to explain to a Caucasian male student how to properly measure with the nonstandard items. When a child in the small group at the kidney shaped table, spilled water from his graduated cylinder, the teacher cleaned up the spilled water with paper towels without any verbal reprimand to the student.				
<b>I-3</b>  <b>Instructional Clarity</b>	The teacher communicates effectively with individual students and classroom groups. Provides plentiful instructional examples and guided practice.	The teacher communicates with clarity and gives step-by-step directions. Provides some examples and practice.	The teacher does not consistently communicate with clarity or often does not provide adequate directions, examples, or practice.	The teacher provides confusing directions, examples, or practice.  The teacher does not fully or clearly explain concepts.

**I-3 SCORE: \_\_4\_\_**    **NOTES/RATIONALE:** Teacher shares positive, funny story about the funnel being used in the classroom. Teacher checks students' knowledge by asking where the measuring cups are found, where can types of liquids be found or can be used in measuring cups and spoons. Teacher regularly checked on whole group about every four minutes while working with a small group of students at the back kidney table, measuring colored water in graduated cylinders. Teacher redirected student with dice on how to properly roll the dice. A Caucasian male student began to throw the dice across the room. Teacher quietly redirected the student and showed the child how to correctly roll the dice on the floor. AA female was not measuring properly w/ unifix cube tower, so the teacher showed her how to break off blocks for measurement using the unifix cubes. Teacher took about 2.5 minutes to explain to a Caucasian male student how to properly measure with the nonstandard items. Teacher gave each student at least 1-2 minutes of individual attention to assess their understanding of the task of measuring with nonstandard items. Students independently measure around room using nonstandard items. Students were instructed to return their items back to their storage location.

## Area I: Instructional Skills (continued)

Title and #	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
<b>I-4</b>  <b>Instructional Complexity</b>	Learning activities require complex thinking as a major focus or extension of the lesson(e.g., students may be asked to analyze cause and effect, identify a problem and pose reasonable solutions, speculate giving details or justification, defend options or argue a position with evidence to a great extent).	<i>Some activities require complex thinking as a secondary focus of the lesson.</i>	Learning activities primarily involve students in tasks that require rote memory or only limited amounts of complex thinking. (e.g., students may be asked to summarize straightforward information, infer simple main ideas).	Learning activities involve students in tasks that do not require any significant degree of complex thinking. Students may be asked to recall basic information.
<b>I-4 SCORE: __4__</b> <b>NOTES/RATIONALE:</b> Students were given time at the beginning of the lesson to roam room to allow movement and measure using nonstandard items. Teacher shares positive, funny story about the funnel being used in the classroom. Teacher checks students' knowledge by asking where the measuring cups are found, where can types of liquids be found or can be used in measuring cups and spoons. Teacher shows students various measurement equipment. Teacher gave each student at least 1-2 minutes of individual attention to assess their understanding of the task of measuring with nonstandard items. Students independently measure around room using nonstandard items. Great deal of student movement in the class. I observed 100% student engagement. Students shared measurement findings with their peers and the teacher.				
<b>I-5</b>  Expectations For Student Learning	<i>The teacher consistently encourages maximum effort from students and provides the encouragement to promote it; stresses student responsibility.</i>	<b>The teacher encourages consistent effort from students and provides encouragement to promote it.</b>	The teacher sets uneven (different) expectations for students without a clear rationale for the differentiation; does not adequately empower students to assume responsibility for learning.	The teacher sets low expectations for most or all students; is not surprised with low performance and demonstrates practice that students are not capable of independent learning.

**I- 5 SCORE: \_\_3\_\_** **NOTES/RATIONALE:** Students clearly understood that they couldn't throw objects in the classroom. Teacher redirected student with dice on how to properly roll the dice. Students regularly raised their hands. AA female was not measuring properly w/ unifix cube tower, so the teacher showed her how to break off blocks for measurement using the unifix cubes. Teacher took about 2.5 minutes to explain to a Caucasian male student how to properly measure with the nonstandard items. She commented the student, "Here Baby, put them here..." Teacher gave each student at least 1-2 minutes of individual attention to assess their understanding of the task of measuring with nonstandard items. Students independently measure around room using nonstandard items. She referenced prior knowledge when working with food color and manipulatives in the past. Students were instructed to return their items back to their storage location. During this transition time, the teacher counted forwards from one to ten, to give students time to return items and to return to their seats. At the number ten, the students were silent.

<p><b>I-6</b></p> <p><b>Use of Technology</b></p>	<p>The evidence indicates that the teacher consistently and effectively integrates available technology and other resources into meaningful and coherent lessons. The teacher creates tasks to further student expertise.</p>	<p>The teacher consistently uses available technology and other resources, when appropriate to objectives</p>	<p>The teacher uses available technology and/or other resources inappropriately or on a limited basis.</p>	<p>The teacher uses little or none of the available technology and/or other resources in instruction.</p>
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**I-6 SCORE: \_\_1\_\_** **NOTES/RATIONALE:** There was no use of technology observed in this observation.

## Area A: Assessment Skills

*Effective teachers use a variety of assessment practices to monitor student learning, including formal and informal assessments and formative and summative assessments. Assessments are used to monitor progress, provide feedback to students and parents, and to adjust instruction. When necessary, effective teachers re-teach material that has not been learned thoroughly.*

Title and #	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
<b>A-1</b>  <b>Assessment for Understanding</b>	The teacher regularly checks in with students to monitor their level of understanding, interest, frustration, etc. Student understanding is assessed through a variety of methods (observation, group questioning, individual conversations, looking at student work, etc.). The teacher remains flexible in instructional decision-making and seems to continuously use "data" to adjust instruction.	The teacher checks in with students periodically, particularly at the end of the lesson to gauge their understanding of content. The methods and extent of checks for understanding are sufficient to identify and address serious misunderstandings but the probing is not detailed and extensive. The teacher may spend additional time questioning individuals.	The teacher may check for understanding once or twice during a lesson by asking for any questions but does very little probing or acting on the information and makes few adjustments to respond to any confusion students express. The teacher seems to either miss student cues that indicate lack of understanding or recognize them but not act on them. Questions are asked to whole class, not individuals.	The teacher seldom or never checks for understanding and seems to teach the lesson as planned with little flexibility for responding to misunderstandings. The teacher does not use observation or questioning or other assessment methods to monitor student understanding.
<b>A-1 SCORE: __4__ NOTES/RATIONALE:</b> Teacher regularly checked on whole group about every four minutes while working with a small group of students at the back kidney table, measuring colored water in graduated cylinders. Teacher was in close proximity to all students "Excellent" – praise to K----- (AA male). A Caucasian male student began to throw the dice across the room. Teacher quietly redirected the student and showed the child how to correctly roll the dice on the floor. AA female was not measuring properly w/ unifix cube tower, so the teacher showed her how to break off blocks for measurement using the unifix cubes. Teacher took about 2.5 minutes to explain to a Caucasian male student how to properly measure with the nonstandard items. Teacher gave each student at least 1-2 minutes of individual attention to assess their understanding of the task of measuring with nonstandard items. Students shared measurement findings with their peers and the teacher. The teacher was smiling and chuckling as she walked around and monitored student progress.				
<b>A-2</b>	The teacher provides <i>verbal</i> feedback consistently, addresses individual student strength and weaknesses, and encourages	The teacher provides <i>verbal</i> feedback that is appropriate and consistently addresses individual student strengths and	The teacher provides minimal <i>verbal</i> feedback on student performance. Feedback does not adequately address	The teacher provides <i>verbal</i> feedback that is limited to correctness of response ("Good answer.") There is



<b>Quality of Verbal Feedback to Students</b>	student self-reflection. Feedback is fair and demonstrates high expectations for all students by encouraging all students to ask questions or contribute to the discussion.	weaknesses. Feedback provides good idea of how students can improve. The teacher spends additional time in explanation or probing questions before moving on if there is confusion.	individual student strengths or weaknesses. Re-direction is inconsistent or limited to only a small number of students.	little or no direction provided for improvement in performance. If a student answers incorrectly, the teacher moves on to another student without discussion.
<p><b>A-2 SCORE: __3__</b>     <b>NOTES/RATIONALE:</b> Teacher checks students' knowledge by asking where are the measuring cups found, where can types of liquids be found or can be used in measuring cups and spoons. "Yes" – teacher provided positive feedback to K----- (AA male). Teacher redirected student with dice on how to properly roll the dice. A Caucasian male student began to throw the dice across the room. Teacher quietly redirected the student and showed the child how to correctly roll the dice on the floor. AA female was not measuring properly w/ unifix cube tower, so the teacher showed her how to break off blocks for measurement using the unifix cubes. Teacher took about 2.5 minutes to explain to a Caucasian male student how to properly measure with the nonstandard items.</p> <p>Teacher gave each student at least 1-2 minutes of individual attention to assess their understanding of the task of measuring with nonstandard items. Students were instructed to return their items back to their storage location.</p> <p>During this transition time, the teacher counted forwards from one to ten, to give students time to return items and to return to their seats. At the number ten, the students were silent. The teacher then gave additional instruction and added a penny to their "goodness buckets". This appeared to be a part of the classroom management system. "This bucket is full over here"</p> <p>"Thank you Babe"</p> <p>"Here Baby, put them here..."</p> <p>"Darling...thank you for...."</p> <p>"Thank you M-----, C-----, and A---- for ...."</p>				

## Area M: Classroom Learning Environment

*The effective teacher creates an overall classroom environment conducive to learning with skills in organization and classroom management. Hershel is consistent in their behavioral expectations and responses, and attends to these elements in a proactive way to establish a positive classroom climate oriented toward learning.*

Title and #	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
<b>M-1</b>  <b>Classroom Management</b>	The teacher uses effective organizational strategies to maintain momentum and variety. Uses preventive management strategies. Students appear to know procedures without being reminded.	The teacher responds to inattention and redirects students. Anticipates and resolves minor inattention without disruption to overall lesson. (May include walking over to student and standing close by.)	The teacher uses primarily reactive management strategies (names on the board, calling students down, etc.). Attempts to intervene met with limited success. Students may continue in disruption.	The teacher reacts to or ignores disciplinary incidents rather than trying to prevent them. Disruptions escalate with minimal intervention by teacher.
<b>M-1 SCORE: __3__</b> <b>NOTES/RATIONALE:</b> Students clearly understood that they couldn't throw objects in the classroom. Teacher redirected student with dice on how to properly roll the dice. Students regularly raised their hands. A Caucasian male student began to throw the dice across the room. Teacher quietly redirected the student and showed the child how to correctly roll the dice on the floor. Students independently measure around room using nonstandard items. Students were instructed to return their items back to their storage location. During this transition time, the teacher counted forwards from one to ten, to give students time to return items and to return to their seats. At the number ten, the students were silent. The teacher then gave additional instruction and added a penny to their "goodness buckets". This appeared to be a part of the classroom management system. The students seemed to understand the relevance of her adding pennies to the buckets on their tables.				
<b>M-2</b>	The teacher incorporates tasks, materials, and space so effectively into ongoing classroom procedures and	<i>The teacher organizes tasks, materials, and space to facilitate learning by students by arranging the room and materials to support the lesson.</i>	The teacher is inconsistent in his/her organization of tasks, materials, and space such that once or twice the lesson was	The teacher demonstrates little organization of tasks, materials, and space such that instructional time is wasted.

<b>Classroom Organization</b>	expectations for students that they seem to know automatically what to do at certain times during the lessons without being told. The arrangement of the room and materials may change from lesson to lesson to support on-going instruction. Transitions, if any, are smooth.	<i>Any movement of students, materials, equipment, etc., occurs with a purpose and supports the lesson.</i>	interrupted by unnecessary movement or searching for materials.	The room/materials are not set up to accommodate students and the lesson.
<b>M-2 SCORE: <u>  3  </u>   NOTES/RATIONALE (describe the room setup)</b>  A small group of students at the back kidney table, measuring colored water in graduated cylinders. AA male students each sat at a rectangular table. There were six rectangular tables in the classroom, 2 kidney shaped tables, small student chairs. Colorful content posters and alphabet strip on the wall. Students were instructed to return their items back to their storage location. During this transition time, the teacher counted forwards from one to ten, to give students time to return items and to return to their seats. At the number ten, the students were silent. Students regularly raised their hands.				

## Area P: Personal Qualities

A teacher's ability to relate with students and to make positive, caring connections with them plays a significant part in supporting the learning environment and student achievement. Effective teachers care about their students and demonstrate that caring so that students are conscious of it.

Title and #	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
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<b>P-1</b>  <b>Caring</b>	The teacher demonstrates sustained caring and commitment toward each individual student.	The teacher generally demonstrates a caring manner.	The teacher inconsistently demonstrates a caring manner with students. Treats some students with less concern than others.	The teacher is uncaring and distant with students. Demonstrates little concern for some students.
<p><b>P-1 SCORE: __4__</b>     <b>NOTES/RATIONALE:</b> Teacher shares positive, funny story about the funnel being used in the classroom. Teacher regularly checked on whole group about every four minutes while working with a small group of students at the back kidney table, measuring colored water in graduated cylinders. When a child in the small group at the kidney shaped table, spilled water from his graduated cylinder, the teacher cleaned up the spilled water with paper towels without any verbal reprimand to the student.</p> <p>The teacher was smiling and chuckling as she walked around and monitored student progress. The teacher then gave additional instruction and added a penny to their “goodness buckets”. This appeared to be a part of the classroom management system. The students seemed to understand the relevance of her adding pennies to the buckets on their tables.</p> <p>“This bucket is full over here”</p> <p>“Thank you Babe”</p> <p>“Here Baby, put them here...”</p> <p>“Darling...thank you for....”</p> <p>“Thank you M-----, C-----, and A---- for ....”</p>				
<b>P-2</b>  <b>Fairness and Respect</b>	The teacher consistently demonstrates fairness and respect toward students and actively promotes these qualities in students.	The teacher treats all students with fairness and respect by providing opportunities to participate and succeed.	The teacher treats some students with less respect than others. Limits some students’ opportunities for involvement and success.	The teacher shows a lack of respect for students and treats students in an unfair manner.
<p><b>P-2 SCORE: __3__</b>     <b>NOTES/RATIONALE:</b> When a child in the small group at the kidney shaped table, spilled water from his graduated cylinder, the teacher cleaned up the spilled water with paper towels without any verbal reprimand to the student. Caucasian male student began to throw the dice across the room. Teacher quietly redirected the student and showed the child how to correctly roll the dice on the floor.</p>				

Area P: Personal Qualities (continued)

<p><b>P-3</b></p> <p><b>Positive Relationships</b></p>	<p>The teacher consistently models and nurtures supportive relationships among students. Initiates activities to make school an enjoyable experience.</p>	<p>The teacher interacts with students in a friendly and personable manner. Participates in activities to make school an enjoyable experience.</p>	<p>The teacher inconsistently responds to students, not always showing interest in students as individuals.</p>	<p>The teacher does not demonstrate a friendly and personable manner toward students either as a group or individuals.</p>
<p><b>P-3 SCORE: <u>  4  </u>      NOTES/RATIONALE:</b> Teacher shares positive, funny story about the funnel being used in the classroom. Teacher regularly checked on whole group about every four minutes while working with a small group of students at the back kidney table, measuring colored water in graduated cylinders. When a child in the small group at the kidney shaped table, spilled water from his graduated cylinder, the teacher cleaned up the spilled water with paper towels without any verbal reprimand to the student. The teacher was smiling and chuckling as she walked around and monitored student progress. The teacher then gave additional instruction and added a penny to their "goodness buckets". This appeared to be a part of the classroom management system. The students seemed to understand the relevance of her adding pennies to the buckets on their tables.</p> <p>"This bucket is full over here"</p> <p>"Thank you Babe"</p> <p>"Here Baby, put them here..."</p> <p>"Darling...thank you for...."</p> <p>"Thank you M-----, C-----, and A---- for ...."</p> <p>When a child in the small group at the kidney shaped table, spilled water from his graduated cylinder, the teacher cleaned up the spilled water with paper towels without any verbal reprimand to the student. Caucasian male student began to throw the dice across the room. Teacher quietly redirected the student and showed the child how to correctly roll the dice on the floor. Teacher gave each student at least 1-2 minutes of individual attention to assess their understanding of the task of measuring with nonstandard items. Students independently measure around room using nonstandard items.</p>				
<p><b>P-4</b></p>	<p>The teacher actively encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning in ways</p>	<p>The teacher promotes enthusiasm for learning and encourages students to be active</p>	<p>The teacher assumes primary responsibility for students' learning and shows limited</p>	<p>The teacher maintains sole responsibility for student learning and discourages</p>

<b>Encouragement of Responsibility</b>	that communicate high regard and high expectations.	participants in their learning.	evidence of trusting students with their learning.	independent thinking by students.
<b>P-4 SCORE: __3__</b> <b>NOTES/RATIONALE:</b> Students were given time at the beginning of the lesson to roam room to allow movement and measure using nonstandard items AA female was not measuring properly w/ unifix cube tower, so the teacher showed her how to break off blocks for measurement using the unifix cubes. Teacher took about 2.5 minutes to explain to a Caucasian male student how to properly measure with the nonstandard items. Students independently measure around room using nonstandard items.				
<b>P-5</b>  <b>Enthusiasm</b>	The teacher is enthusiastic and demonstrates a passion for teaching that is evident in the care with which instruction is prepared and presented; promotes students' enjoyment of learning	The teacher demonstrates a positive attitude about life and teaching; demonstrates care about student outcomes	The teacher shows positive feelings toward student learning in inconsistent ways; seldom encourages students' enjoyment of learning	The teacher rarely, if ever, shows positive feelings toward instruction or student learning; overtly discourages student enjoyment of learning
<b>P-5 SCORE: __4__</b> <b>NOTES/RATIONALE:</b> Teacher was enthusiastic about the nonstandard measurement unit. She referenced prior knowledge when working with food color and manipulatives in the past. Teacher shares positive, funny story about the funnel being used in the classroom. Students shared measurement findings with their peers and the teacher. The teacher was smiling and chuckling as she walked around and monitored student progress. The teacher then gave additional instruction and added a penny to their "goodness buckets". Teacher gave each student at least 1-2 minutes of individual attention to assess their understanding of the task of measuring with nonstandard items.				

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**Appendix F**  
**Transcribed Interview – Mrs. Blue**

Interview Blue #13  
Caucasian female 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher.  
2 years at this school (TES) however has taught 8 years in all.  
She is a Mother  
Length: 13 minutes long.

R: What do you feel defines a positive teacher-student relationship?

B: I think showing the students that you care. Greeting them every morning, making it a nurturing place. Students who feel like you care about them are more likely to succeed for you and try harder for you. So I try to form relationships with them, maybe go to some of their sporting events outside of school, or talk to them about some of their interests. Just so it's not all school, all the time.

R: Okay. I hear you say that you feel that showing students that you care about them or that teachers care about them. Providing that morning greeting when they walk into the classroom, a nurturing environment. Students who feel that you care perform better academically and that taking the time to truly learn the students' interests um outside of school is a good way or a good definition for positive T-S-R.

B: Right.

R: Okay. What are strategies that you use as a classroom teacher to form positive relationships with all of your students?

B: Um I try to be more than just like their teacher to them. I try to treat them as if they were my own kids. How I would want my kids to be treated if they were sent to somebody's classroom. If they walk in and they look sad, comforting them. If a kid comes in and they are tired or something has happened, they are not really going to have a successful day, so it's important that they know that you care about their outside needs also. So I just try and talk to them, try to have fun with them. Even if it's just play at recess w/ them so that they can see you as more than just authority figure.

R: So one of the strategies or several of the strategies that you use to form positive relationships w/ your students is that you purposely try to treat your students as if they were your own personal children. You comfort them when they are sad. You show that you care about their outside needs not just their academic performance. Do you also do the a.m. greeting, you mentioned that earlier?

B: Yes.

R: As you defined the positive T-S-R, and um the interest inventory? Do you do that also? Is that a strategy that you feel that you use to form positive T-S-R?

B: At the beginning of the year.

R: Yes.

B: We do an "All About Me" Bag.

R: Okay. Tell me about that.

B: So we just, I start it off. I pull out things about me so they know stuff about me. And then the next day they have to bring the bag in w/ stuff about them. So it teaches me their likes, their interests, what's going on in their family. A lot of them will bring in something military, if they are military, so I will know if somebody's deployed or not, b/c that's extra, extra baggage they have so, just try to, I mean it helps a lot b/c you can get to know them.

R: Okay. What do positive teacher-student relationships look like in your classroom? For children that you feel that you have formed a positive T-S-R, what does that look like? If someone walked into your classroom, how would an outsider come to the conclusion that there is a positive T-S-R w/ you and a certain student?

B: Um, I like to have fun w/ my kids so I feel my room's not intense. It's very smiley; and it's very, I try not to yell. I don't consider myself someone who yells. So I feel like they can come to me anytime and ask me stuff, whether they need help, whether they messed up, made a mistake, so I just try to, it's just a very open environment.

R: So I hear you say that you have fun w/ your students. You keep your room very smiling; it's a very open environment; it's inviting. You don't yell at your students and you as a teacher attempt to be approachable for and to your students.



B: Yes.

R: Okay, describe for me positive teacher-student relationships that you have with the African-American elementary male students in your classroom.

B: I would say that I try to have positive relationships w/ all of my students. I don't really pay attention to if they are AA or Hispanic, or you know White students, male or female. I try to treat them all the same. So I just do the same thing that I do w/ all of them. I try to get to know them on a personal level. I'm just, like I said before, I'm just a believer that if they think you know you like them, that they want to do better for you.

R: Okay. Can you describe an actual positive T-S-R that you have had over the years? How many years have you taught?

B: Eight.

R: Okay so when you reflect over the past eight years, have you always taught on the elementary level?

B: Yes.

R: Um when you reflect over the past 8 years, I'm sure that you have had an opportunity to teach some AA elementary male students, is that an accurate statement?

B: Yes.

R: And based upon those students can you describe what a relationship w/ any of them has looked like?

B: Um, the school I came from was a lot more AA males. It was a lot lower income school so that was, they came w/ baggage, a lot of them. They came from single family homes where it was usually only mom. And there was usually a lot of siblings in the house. So they came needing a little bit extra love, extra attention. And for some of them it was harder to form relationships w/ them b/c everyone they have gotten close to maybe has hurt them. So it was just taking that extra step. Um, you know. Some students I would make, you know if they did good for a week, I would take them to Chic-Fil-A for lunch or they would get to go here or there w/ me. So, it was just making them know that you were going to be there no matter what.

R: How was that received by their parents?

B: It was good. The ones I did that w/, I formed a relationship w/ the parent and then the student. Not everyone, not every parent was a great relationship b/c not everyone looked at a teacher as someone who wants to help.

R: Okay, so I hear you saying based upon the description of those specific T-S-R that were positive w/ AA elementary male students over the past 8 years, especially when you reference students from your previous school, a lot of them came from single family households, mother-led, low income. Just giving them some extra love and attention, then really showing that you had interest in them as a whole not just their academic side. Do you feel that that really helped to solidify or to even forge some of those relationships and to make them positive?

B: Yes.

R: Okay, what factors do you feel are unique to forging successful teacher-student relationships with your African-American elementary male students compared to relationships w/ other students?

B: I guess in the past, most of, like I said before, they came with a little more baggage. They came w/ broken homes. Somebody wasn't there, somebody had let them down. So I think just, they had a tougher front, I guess that you had to break through to form that relationship w/ them but then once you form that relationship it was very tight with them.

R: Would you describe that hard front that you just mentioned as trust issues?

B: Yeah, I think it's their defense mechanism.

R: Okay. All right. So what types of factors do you feel are unique to forging these relationships? If you had to tell someone who was say a new teacher, either new to a building or a first-year, or new to the field, and you knew that this person was going to have AA male elementary students in their classroom, what factors would you tell that person that you feel are unique so that that person could form a positive T-S-R w/ their AA male elementary students?

B: Um, maybe just give it time. You have to prove to them that you are not going to leave, that you are not going to let them down. That

when they do have that attitude sometimes you push people that you care about the most away so just give 'em time. You know give 'em space. But just consistently show them that you care and they will come around.

R: What about the tone that you use to speak to them or the word choice? Do you think that any of that plays a part in forging those relationships and making them successful?

B: Yeah, I think those kids that come from the broken home they are used to being screamed at, they are used to being yelled at and that's what they understand. Um, they are used to being lied to and stuff like that. So, this consistently calm voice, happy to see them, they are not bothering you, they are not bugging you, you are proud of them no matter what they do, just for them to hear that sometimes that's the only time they get to hear it.

R: Okay. So I hear you saying that once again showing the children that you truly care, giving them time, giving them space also?

B: Mm-hmm

R: Showing them that you have an honest interest in them as a whole person, not just their academic side. Have you ever been unsuccessful in forming a positive relationship with an African-American male elementary student?

B: Yes.

R: And what happened? Why do you perceive it was unsuccessful?

B: Um, I think like any student sometimes there is personality conflict. Some students don't want to let you in as much as you try so you can try all you want but that's just how that person is.

R: Okay.

B: So I have, yeah.

R: What types of things did you do to attempt to bridge that gap w/ those children? Or would you say it was one child or a number of students?

B: I would say maybe one or two.

R: Okay. So maybe with those one or two students that were AA male elementary students, and that you said that you were unsuccessful in forming a positive relationship b/c of that hard exterior, not really wanting to let you as a teacher be close to them for whatever reason, um, was it things that you specifically tried and found that they didn't work? Or..

B: I think it's just that, you know I tried w/ the student, I tried w/ the parent but once some students see how their parents treat a teacher then if they are nice to that teacher it's almost as if they are going against their parent.

R: Okay.

B: So if they go home and the parent hates you all day then it's hard for them to come to school and love you b/c that's, that's their parent.

R: Okay.

B: So I think it's hard sometimes when they hear stuff at home, I mean kids pick up on that.

R: Yes. Okay. So when parents have not formed a positive relationship w/ the teacher, do you feel that that makes it challenging for the teacher to form a positive relationship w/ the student?

B: I do. B/c if I have a positive relationship w/ the parent we can work together whether it's academics or behavior. If not, then we are not working together.

R: Do you feel that that's unique to AA elementary male students?

B: No. I'd say that's the case for any students.

R: Okay. Okay. Well, thank you very much.

## **Appendix G**

### **Member Check – Interview Summary**

Interview Mrs. Orange #10 recording  
Caucasian female Kindergarten teacher.  
1<sup>st</sup> year at this school (YES) however has taught 11 years.  
Mother

R: What do you feel defines a positive teacher-student relationships?

O: A positive teacher student relationship begins with the teacher being positive, being encouraging with the students, and directing them, especially in Kindergarten in a loving way. You always treat them like your own kids. my own. You have learned how to balance when students need that positive loving nudge and when they need a reality check. Even reprimands and redirection can always be done with love. Positive teacher-student relationships are created when teachers themselves are positive and that they direct their students in a loving respectful manner.

R: What are strategies that you use to form positive relationships with all of your students?

Strategies that are used to form positive relationships with all of your students include: getting to know them very quickly and within the first two days of knowing their name, calling them by name, talking to them by bending down to their physical level, especially making that eye contact. Taking the time to get to know your students by sitting and chatting with a kid for 2 minutes, 5 minutes, and if you are standing in line really ask them about their weekend and really taking a vested interest in who they are.

R: Do you find that researching cumulative folders or any of that information that is given to teachers or to the staff at the beginning of the year is helpful in learning about your students?

O: Cumulative file data provide insight on the students' family and family dynamics, their background, residence information, rate of transiency, minutes from prior meetings. Kindergarten is difficult b/c one typically doesn't have the advantage of having a teacher from past

years to ask questions. I do share pertinent information about my students with 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers that I feel would be helpful.

R: Describe for me a positive teacher-student relationships that you have with say an African-American elementary male student in your classroom.

O: The little boy did not buy-in to Kindergarten at the start of the school year and did not enjoy working at all. Being in close contact with his divorced parents, who were both very supportive, allowed us to redirect this student's academic performance and behavior. You frequently communicated with his parents through phone calls and conferences. You shared your academic and behavioral expectations and ideas for this student with his parents and they followed through on it. They enlisted other family members to work with this student in the afternoon and developed a structured homework routine also. Of course that extra practice in his academics, bumps up his academics in the classroom. It also boosted his self-confidence. He could then come to school having practiced his reading book at night, wanting to read when he was in reading group and having a confidence to be a leader in that reading group. His progress has been amazing. His family and you are so proud of him. You are really proud of his parents also.

R: What is your perception then as to what has made this teacher-student relationship so positive with this specific AA male student?

O: This child understood that his teacher cared enough about him to contact his parents. Your high expectations were also communicated to the student. The student took full advantage of the opportunities afforded to him and he began to thrive. Once he knew he was surrounded by a team of people that cared about him and held high expectations for him; he began to really succeed.

R: So what specific things do you think that you have done as a teacher this year with this specific AA male student that really demonstrated to him that you cared about him as an individual?

O: Consistent communication with his parents showed this student that you and his parents were a team that cared about him and had his best interest at heart. Lots of praise was provided to this student whenever he turned in his homework journal. By showing him the improvement in his work, on a monthly basis, he began to take pride in himself and his work. Sharing your high expectations for this student also showed the student that you cared.

R: What did showing the student his work improvement month to month, look like?

O: At the beginning of the school year, this student was just going through the motions to complete the homework journal assignment. He was not putting forth any effort. You realized that the student was capable of a higher quality/caliber of work. The student's grandmother held the student to high standards and demanded that he perform to his ability level. The student began to progress and improve the quality of his work. By the end of the year, this student is so proud of the work he has done with his grandmother.

R: Did you ever conference with him? Did you pull him aside at any time during the school year to show him the progression that he made?

O: You showed the student his homework journal each month. You praised him on his color usage, his illustrations, his penmanship, his letter formation, and his punctuation. The student recognized the improvement in his work. Today all of the students that submitted an acceptable homework journal, participated in a homework journal party to celebrate their growth.

R: How many years have you taught?

O: 11 years.

R: And in those 11 years, have you worked with multiple AA male elementary students?

O: Yes.

R: What is your perception of what has made your relationships with that specific group of students positive?

O: You said that communication is a big factor. At your school, the staff is encouraged to be sensitive to the fact that parents may not have had positive school experiences. Past negative school experiences by parents may color their interactions with teachers. If teachers show parents that they are an integral part of their child's success; that there will be teacher-parent communication; and that the teacher will listen, then teachers and parents can work together. Communication is the key.

R: So I hear you say that communication is a factor that you feel is unique to forging successful Teacher Student Relationships with your AA elementary male students. Are there other factors?

O: Communication is essential to that relationship. It's important that the teacher builds relationships with all of the students. One never knows if the parent is expressing negative thoughts about school in the home environment to the student. Having high expectations is also key to successful teacher-student-relationships.

R: How are your relationships w/ AA male elementary students in your class unique maybe compared to your relationships with some of your other students?

O: There are times when communication with parents isn't as easy, and phone information isn't as accessible. Having to catch a parent at early dismissal or at parent pickup for a brief conference is a reality. Although facing communication challenges could occur with any student therefore, it's not unique to African-American male elementary students. Communication is unique and essential for all of your students. You try your best to create and maintain a positive teacher-student-relationship with all of your students, regardless of race or gender.

R: Have you ever been unsuccessful in forming a positive relationship with an African-American male elementary student?

O: Your unsuccessful teacher-student relationship experiences were not with African-American male elementary students.

Instead you shared an example of a positive teacher-student relationship from a previous school year with an African-American male elementary student. You shared that the student's father was incarcerated, his mother had remarried, and that she was uncertain about revealing the father's identity to the student. The student's mother also grappled with the decision to have the student visit his father in prison. This parent felt comfortable talking and confiding in you because you talked to her as a fellow mother, not so much as a teacher. The father was being released from prison and this was another concern for the student's mother. You shared that when families are in crisis or having problems at home, it's helpful if they can feel like teachers have their child's academics covered at school so that they can focus on the issues outside of school. Your relationship with this parent and student was great.



Communication is necessary for forging positive teacher-parent relationships this allowing teachers to have positive teacher-student relationships. This enforces for the child that the teacher and their parents are teaming up to help the child be successful. Teachers should also get to know their students. Tapping into a student's interests is important to building a positive relationship with them.

## Appendix H Coded Interview – Mrs. Blue

### Coded Interview Blue

I think showing the students that you care.	CLOSENESS
Greeting them every morning,	ROUTINE
making it a nurturing place.	CLOSENESS
Students who feel like you care about them	CLOSENESS
are more likely to succeed for you and try harder for you.	T-S RELATIONSHIP
So I try to form relationships with them,	T-S RELATIONSHIP
maybe go to some of their sporting events outside of school,	ATHLETICS
or talk to them about some of their interests.	OUTSIDE INTERESTS
Just so it's not all school, all the time.	OUTSIDE INTERESTS
Right.	CLOSENESS (c.m.ck)
	ROUTINE (c.m.ck)
	OUTSIDEINTERESTS (c.m.ck)
Um I try to be more than just like their teacher to them.	CLOSENESS
I try to treat them as if they were my own kids.	CLOSENESS
How I would want my kids to be treated	CLOSENESS
if they were sent to somebody's classroom.	CLOSENESS
If they walk in and they look sad, comforting them.	CLOSENESS
If a kid comes in and they are tired or something has happened,	CLOSENESS
they are not really going to have a successful day,	CLOSENESS
so it's important that they know that you care	CLOSENESS
about their outside needs also.	CLOSENESS
So I just try and talk to them, try to have fun with them.	BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS
Even if it's just play at recess w/ them	BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS
so that they can see you as more than just authority figure.	BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS
Yes.	CLOSENESS (c.m.ck)
	BLDG RELATIONSHIPS (c.m.ck)
	ROUTINE (c.m.ck)
At the beginning of the year.	BEGINNING OF YEAR
We do an "All About Me" Bag.	BEGINNING OF YEAR
So we just, I start it off.	TEACHER PERSONAL
I pull out things about me so they know stuff about me.	TEACHER PERSONAL
And then the next day they have to bring the bag in	
w/ stuff about them.	
So it teaches me their likes, their interests,	OUTSIDE INTERESTS
what's going on in their family.	FAMILY STRUCTURE
A lot of them will bring in something military,	FAMILY STRUCTURE
if they are military, so I will know if somebody's deployed or not,	FAMILY STRUCTURE
b/c that's extra, extra baggage they have so,	FAMILY STRUCTURE
just try to, I mean it helps a lot b/c you can get to know them.	WHOLE CHILD
Um, I like to have fun w/ my kids so I feel my room's not intense.	POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

It's very smiley; and it's very, I try not to yell.  
 I don't consider myself someone who yells.  
 So I feel like they can come to me anytime and ask me stuff,  
 whether they need help, whether they messed up,  
 made a mistake, so I just try to,  
 it's just a very open environment.  
 Yes.

I would say that I try to have positive relationships  
 w/ all of my students.  
 I don't really pay attention to if they are AA or Hispanic,  
 or you know White students, male or female.  
 I try to treat them all the same.  
 So I just do the same thing that I do w/ all of them.  
 I try to get to know them on a personal level.  
 I'm just, like I said before, I'm just a believer  
 that if they think you know you like them,  
 that they want to do better for you.  
 Eight.  
 Yes.  
 Yes.

Um, the school I came from was a lot more AA males.  
 It was a lot lower income school so that was,  
 they came w/ baggage, a lot of them.  
 They came from single family homes  
 where it was usually only mom.  
 And there was usually a lot of siblings in the house.  
 So they came needing a little bit extra love,  
 extra attention.  
 And for some of them  
 it was harder to form relationships w/ them b/c  
 everyone they have gotten close to maybe has hurt them.  
 So it was just taking that extra step.  
 Um, you know.

Some students I would make, you know if they did good for a week,  
 I would take them to Chic-Fil-A for lunch  
 or they would get to go here or there w/ me.  
 So, it was just making them know  
 that you were going to be there no matter what.  
 It was good.

The ones I did that with, I formed a relationship w/ the parent  
 and then the student.  
 Not every one, not every parent was a great relationship  
 because not everyone looked at a teacher  
 as someone who wants to help.

POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT  
 POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT  
 CHILD COMFORT LEVEL  
 CHILD COMFORT LEVEL  
 CHILD COMFORT LEVEL  
 CHILD COMFORT LEVEL  
 POSITIVE ENVIRONMT (c.m.ck)  
 CHILD COMFORT LEVL (c.m.ck)  
 T-S RELATIONSHIPS  
 ALL STUDENTS  
 COLOR BLINDNESS  
 COLOR BLINDNESS  
 COLOR BLINDNESS  
 COLOR BLINDNESS  
 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS  
 TEACHER FEELINGS  
 CLOSENESS  
 CLOSENESS  
 TEACHING LENGTH  
 TEACHING LEVEL  
 AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE  
 AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE  
 FAMILY STRUCTURE  
 FAMILY STRUCTURE  
 FAMILY STRUCTURE  
 FAMILY STRUCTURE  
 FAMILY STRUCTURE  
 TEACHER SUPPORT  
 ATTENTION  
 AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE  
 STUDENT NOT OPEN  
 STUDENT NOT OPEN  
 TEACHER SUPPORT  
 MISC  
 REWARD  
 REWARD  
 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS  
 TEACHER IS CONSTANT  
 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS  
 T-P RELATIONSHIP  
 T-S RELATIONSHIP  
 UNSUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIP  
 UNSUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIP  
 UNSUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIP

Yes.

I guess in the past, most of, like I said before,  
they came with a little more baggage.  
They came with broken homes.  
Somebody wasn't there, somebody had let them down.  
So I think just, they had a tougher front,  
I guess that you had to break through  
to form that relationship with them  
but then once you form that relationship  
it was very tight with them.  
Yeah, I think it's their defense mechanism.  
Um, maybe just give it time.  
You have to prove to them that you are not going to leave,  
that you are not going to let them down.  
That when they do have that attitude  
sometimes you push people that you care about the most away  
so just give 'em time. You know give 'em space.  
But just consistently show them that you care  
and they will come around.  
Yeah, I think those kids that come from the broken home  
they are used to being screamed at,  
they are used to being yelled at and that's what they understand.  
Um, they are used to being lied to and stuff like that.  
So, this consistently calm voice,  
happy to see them, they are not bothering you,  
they are not bugging you,  
you are proud of them no matter what they do,  
just for them to hear that  
sometimes that's the only time they get to hear it.  
Mm-hmm  
Yes.  
Um, I think like any student sometimes  
there is personality conflict.  
Some students don't want to let you in  
as much as you try so you can try all you want  
but that's just how that person is.  
So I have, yeah.  
I would say maybe one or two.  
I think it's just that, you know I tried w/ the student,  
I tried w/ the parent but once some students see  
how their parents treat a teacher then if they are nice to that teacher  
it's almost as if they are going against their parent.  
So if they go home and the parent hates you all day

FAMILYSTRUCTURE (c.m.ck)  
TEACHER SUPPORT (c.m.ck)  
BLDG RELATIONSHIP (c.m.ck)  
FAMILY STRUCTURE  
FAMILY STRUCTURE  
FAMILY STRUCTURE  
TEACHER IS CONSTANT  
STUDENT NOT OPEN  
STUDENT NOT OPEN  
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS  
T-S RELATIONSHIP  
T-S RELATIONSHIP  
STUDENT NOT OPEN  
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS  
TEACHER IS CONSTANT  
TEACHER IS CONSTANT  
STUDENT NOT OPEN  
STUDENT NOT OPEN  
STUDENT NOT OPEN  
CLOSENESS  
CLOSENESS  
FAMILY STRUCTURE  
FAMILY STRUCTURE  
FAMILY STRUCTURE  
FAMILY STRUCTURE  
POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT  
POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT  
POSITIVE COMMUNICATION  
POSITIVE COMMUNICATION  
POSITIVE COMMUNICATION  
POSITIVE COMMUNICATION  
CLOSENESS (confirmd.m.ck)  
UNSUCCESSFUL T-S-R  
UNSUCCESSFUL T-S-R  
UNSUCCESSFUL T-S-R  
STUDENT NOT OPEN  
STUDENT NOT OPEN  
STUDENT NOT OPEN  
STUDENT NOT OPEN  
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE  
UNSUCCESSFUL T-S-R  
UNSUCCESSFUL T-S-R  
UNSUCCESSFUL T-S-R  
UNSUCCESSFUL T-S-R  
UNSUCCESSFUL T-S-R

then it's hard for them to come to school  
and love you b/c that's, that's their parent.  
So I think it's hard sometimes when they hear stuff at home,  
I mean kids pick up on that.  
I do.  
B/c if I have a positive relationship w/ the parent  
we can work together whether it's academics or behavior.  
If not, then we are not working together.  
No. I'd say that's the case for any students.

*c.m. ck = confirmed member check*

UNSUCCESSFUL T-S-R  
UNSUCCESSFUL T-S-R  
UNSUCCESSFUL T-S-R  
UNSUCCESSFUL T-S-R  
UNSUCCESSFUL TSR (c.m.ck)  
T-P RELATIONSHIP  
T-P RELATIONSHIP  
UNSUCCESSFUL T-S-R  
ALL STUDENTS

## **Appendix I**

### **Researcher as Instrument**

As the research instrument for my study, I realize the importance of disclosing my beliefs, values, and expectations to the readers of this study. My personal biases and experiences will frame the interpretation, analysis, and reporting of the data and information reported in this study. The research plan submitted would explore the dispositions and practices of elementary school teachers on how they build teacher-student relationships with African-American male students in their classrooms. This research study is done from an interpretivist paradigm and case study approach therefore, the researcher will interpret the meaning of the data gathered from the participants during the face-to-face interviews and observations.

#### **Experiences, Beliefs, and Values**

The experience that reminds me of the importance of teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students occurred when I was a second grade classroom teacher. I found the name of a certain African-American male student on my class roster that August whose reputation for being a discipline problem preceded him. Many of my colleagues warned me that this student was troublesome and had severe behavior problems and would be difficult to teach. However, I decided, prior to ever meeting this student, that if I was going to have a successful year that I had to like this student and regardless of his behavior become truly concerned with his academic growth in my class. I took one look at this little boy on the first day of school and began the road to developing a positive teacher-student relationship with this student.

There were days when he would try my patience, make poor choices, and not behave appropriately but no matter what, each day was a fresh start with the promise of being a better day than the one preceding. Over time, this student learned to trust me and grew comfortable with the idea that I really liked him and sincerely cared about his well being. When I asked him why his behavior was out of sorts for substitute teachers, his reply was, "I'm only going to be good for you." This taught me that I had been given the gift of influence in this student's life and so I had to use this opportunity to make a positive difference for this African-American male elementary student. This student reminded me why I had chosen education as a career instead of taking a different path. This positive teacher-student relationship recapped for me the impact that educators can truly make in the lives of the students that we teach and interact with regularly. Therefore, I decided to provide for this student not just instruction on academics but also to give him some helpful tools in navigating social situations and character building tips for his life. I took interest in this student and over time discovered that he had difficulty reading and sought instructional support for this student.

I relished my time with him, and his twenty other peers, that school year. After leaving the classroom to pursue educational administration, I would still return to visit this student annually to let him know that I still cared about him, he was still important to me, and that his success was still important to me. Over time he no longer needed an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and his name was often found on the honor roll at his school. Although time has passed and he has transferred to another school division, I often think of him and the school year that we spent together. I am so proud of the young man that he has become and how he handles all of the obstacles and challenges that he

has faced over the years. As an educator, one never knows the experiences that students are bringing to the classroom. It is our responsibility to serve as a beacon of light in their lives to shine on their strengths, assist with building their weaknesses, and inspiring them to strive for greatness and not mediocrity. I am honored and humbled at the opportunity to impart wisdom to youth and embrace the way that they undoubtedly change my life.

Teachers have served as pillars of knowledge in our society for decades, instilling morals, values, and character building lessons in their students, making teacher-student relationships invaluable. As a classroom teacher, administrator, and teacher mentor, I value and encourage teacher-student relationships, especially those with African-American male students. As a student, I know that I always performed better academically when I felt that the instructors were vested in my success. I have personally seen the amazing academic and social growth that occurs in students when they feel supported, valued, and respected by their teacher.

### **Study Expectations**

I expect that the perspectives held by local elementary teachers about forming teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students would be similar. I anticipate that challenges such as poor study habits, discipline, and lack of motivation will surface in the interviews regarding African-American male students. But I also expect that many teachers will share stories similar to mine where they were able to make a positive difference in the life of an African-American male elementary student. Teaching an African-American male student is challenging in today's society but far from impossible when the idea that "all students can be successful" is truly embraced.



I am prepared to discover that teachers may give up or become discouraged when faced with opposition from African-American male elementary students or their families. I realize that all teachers enter the profession with preconceived notions, stereotypes, and bias based on their individual past experiences and this impacts their teacher-student relationships, negatively and/or positively. The media in our society has painted a negative appearance of African-American males compared to their counterparts. This perspective often carries over into schools and classrooms, spilling into personal interactions between teachers and students.

However, I do believe that there are specific practices that teachers implement that lead to positive teacher-student relationships that benefit African-American male elementary students in their academic careers. I believe that teacher's intonation of voice, word choice, physical proximity, and body language have the power to impact teacher-student relationships positively or negatively. I am not willing to discover that teachers are incapable of forming positive teacher-student relationships with African-American male students. I do not believe that there are students, of any race or gender, that don't deserve to be championed by their teacher and made to feel important and successful. I feel that children learn differently but that it is the responsibility of the teacher to attempt numerous instructional and behavioral methods in an effort to meet the needs of the students in their classrooms.

### **Outcomes**

I hope this study will provide a more in-depth understanding of how teachers forge teacher-student relationships with the African-American male elementary students in their classrooms. This study will also shed light on how classroom practices impact

teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students. I also feel that by obtaining the perspective of elementary teachers on these specific practices that are being implemented in their classrooms, that other educators, parents, and the general public may be able to further understand factors that assist in forging successful teacher-student relationships.

**Appendix J**  
**Consent to Participate in Research Study**

**Consent for Participation Form**

**Dispositions and Practices that Promote Teacher-Student Relationships with  
African-American Male Elementary Students**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in a case study involving six individuals currently teaching in a public elementary school setting. This study will provide insight into how elementary teachers form teacher-student relationships with their African-American male students. I understand that the researcher has purposely selected six elementary classroom teachers, through the results of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale. The researcher is conducting this study and will be reporting on the lived experiences and perceptions of participants as part of a Dissertation Research Study (EDUC 800) at the College of William and Mary.

As a participant I understand that my involvement in the study is purposeful in that I may be increasing my awareness and furthering the awareness of others' about practices that promote teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students. I understand that I will be expected to: participate in at least one interview, lasting approximately one hour; and two participant observations during instructional time with African-American male elementary students, lasting approximately 45 minutes. I am aware that the honesty and accuracy of my responses are crucial for this study. During the interview, I will be asked questions regarding my experiences concerning forging teacher-student relationships with African-American elementary male students. I agree that I will read and review summaries of the information generated during the interview to check for accuracy.

The researcher has informed me that information obtained through the interview and observation will be audio taped to ensure accuracy of information I supply. To ensure confidentiality, a pseudonym, chosen by the researcher and a corresponding key linking me to the pseudonym will be used to protect my identity. All audio recordings, written records, and the key linking my name to the pseudonym will be stored on a password protected computer which will be accessible only by the participating researcher. Once recordings have been transcribed, they will be erased and no longer available for use. At the conclusion of the study, all pseudonyms and other identifying information will be destroyed. I understand that all efforts will be made to conceal my identity in the study's report of results and to keep my personal information confidential.

Because I will be asked questions regarding my experiences about building teacher-student relationships with African-American male elementary students, there may be some minimal psychological discomfort involved with this research. I understand that I do not have to answer every question asked of me, and I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in this study at any time by informing the

researcher by telephone or email. My decision to participate or not participate will not affect my relationship with faculty, administration, or with the College in general. If I have questions or problems that arise in connection with my participation in this study, I should contact Dr. James Stronge, the dissertation chairperson and professor of EDUC 800 at 757-221-2339 or [jhstro@wm.edu](mailto:jhstro@wm.edu). I understand that I may report any problems or dissatisfaction to Dr. Thomas Ward, chair of the School of Education Internal Review Committee at 757-221-2358 or [tjward@wm.edu](mailto:tjward@wm.edu) or Dr. Lee Kirkpatrick, the chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee at the College of William and Mary at 757-221-3997 or [lakirk@wm.edu](mailto:lakirk@wm.edu)

My signature below signifies that I am at least 18 years of age, that I have received a copy of this consent form that is mine to keep, and that I consent to participating in this case study.

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Date

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Participant

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Date

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Researcher

## Vita

Karyn Mitchell Yeldell

Birthdate	December 14, 1973	
Birthplace	Hampton, VA	
Education	2006-2012	The College of William and Mary Williamsburg, VA Doctorate of Education in Educational Policy Planning and Leadership
	2002-2006	Old Dominion University Norfolk, VA Master of Science in Elementary Education
	1988-1991	Virginia Tech Blacksburg, VA Bachelor of Science in Marketing Management
Professional Experience	2011-2012	Elementary Assistant Principal York County School Division Yorktown, VA
	2008-2011	Assessment Compliance Intervention Coordinator York County School Division Yorktown, VA
	2005 – 2008	Second Grade Classroom Teacher York County School Division Yorktown, VA
	2002-2005	Third Grade Classroom Teacher Newport News Public Schools Newport News, VA